Opposing Europe: Party Systems
and Opposition to the Union, the Euro
and Europeanisation

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Abstract

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This paper provides an account of a workshop held in June 2000 at the Sussex European Institute to found a network of scholars working on the issue of Euroscepticism in party systems. The paper provides a summary of four presentations including a framework for understanding comparative Euroscepticism in Eastern and Western Europe and three cases studies of Euroscepticism in the UK, France and the Czech and Slovak Republics. In addition the paper records the discussion that emerged around the presentations and the future objectives and questions for the 'Opposing Europe' network.

Opposing Europe: Party Systems and Opposition to the Union, the Euro and Europeanisation

Proceedings of a Workshop held at the Sussex European Institute, sponsored by its Centre on European Political Economy, 23 June 2000

The workshop was held in order to bring together country experts who could contribute to our understanding of comparative Euroscepticism and as the initial event in the founding of a semi-formal network of scholars working on the issue of support for European integration in European states. The impetus came from a growth of interest in scholars focusing on the EU on the nature of support and opposition in member and prospective member states.

The workshop was designed to fulfil five specific functions: (1) to establish a network of scholars working on the effects of the EU on domestic party systems; (2) to establish some base points for research (be they assumptions, propositions or research foci); (3) to discuss the issue of opposition/Euroscepticism as *one* part of the larger agenda about domestic party systems; (4) to pool empirical material and expertise on a range of country cases; (5) to establish plans for future activities/ventures for a network.

Euroscepticism and the impact on EU party systems: a framework for analysis

The workshop began with Paul Taggart (SEI) and Aleks Szczerbiak (SEI) presenting on 'Euroscepticism and the Impact on European Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis'.

Paul Taggart opened the first session by stressing that the workshop had been designed as an open forum to set questions rather than to report on findings and to establish a network of scholars working on the issue of the impact of the EU on domestic party systems.

The methodological premises of the workshop, as conceived by the organisers, were described as three-fold. The first premise is that comparative approaches are necessary to understand changing party systems. The second premise is that it is increasingly impossible to separate out the EU level of politics from European Politics in the sense of domestic politics of European states. This means that there is need to inject more consideration of politics into the study of the EU which has been more concerned with the study of polity (institutions) and policy. Comparative politics is particularly well placed to redress this imbalance. It is useful to use the tools of comparative politics to analyse the EU *and* to treat the EU as a comparative case itself. It also means that comparative approaches would benefit from being inclusive and incorporating a wide definition of European politics. The bifurcation of Europe into West and East with the concomitant EU-member-states and non-member states is insufficient and being rendered redundant by projected future enlargement of the EU. Treating Europe in its broadest sense also means that we need to go beyond simply

applying Western models to Eastern cases and recognise that the transformation of Europe means that there may be a need to recast western models of politics.

Taking a pan-European approach is a relatively innovative approach. We have seen the emergence of applications of Western models of parties and party systems to the East (e.g. Kitschelt, 1992; Kopecky, 1995; Lewis, 1996; Mair, 1996; Szczerbiak, forthcoming) but few scholars taking a truly pan-European approach. Incorporating the EU into the study of domestic politics by focusing on different levels and integrating the study of West with East European politics, in simple terms, means looking up and down and Westward and Eastward in looking at European politics.

The Nature of Euroscepticism
When we focus on Euroscepticism, two points stand out from a consideration of the West European cases; it would be interesting to see how far they hold true in the cases of Eastern and Central Europe. The first is that opposition to the EU brings together 'strange bedfellows' of some very different ideologies. Opposition extends from new politics, old far left politics through regionalism to new populism and neo-fascism in the far right. The second point is that opposition to the EU seems to be related to the positions of parties in their party systems. It differentiates between parties at the core and those at the periphery in the sense that wholly Eurosceptical parties are at the peripheries of their party systems while parties at the core of their party systems are generally not Eurosceptical. It also varies in the sense that the manifestation of Euroscepticism at the core of party systems is fundamentally different from its manifestation elsewhere. In large part Euroscepticism at the core of party systems tends to manifest itself through factional conflicts rather than through parties as unified wholes. This warns us about the danger of treating parties, like realism in International Relations treats states, as unified entities.

Euroscepticism and Party Systems
We are assuming that there are reasons for studying Euroscepticism that go beyond interest in the subject for its own sake - to some extent, it is a minor phenomenon which we can justify an interest in as 'the dog that didn't bark', as the flip side of the permissive consensus of the major parties behind support for European integration. However, there are substantive reasons that go beyond this. These reasons relate to what they tell us about: (1) party systems; (2) protest; (3) the nature of European integration; (4) Europeanisation.

Euroscepticism seems to be related, at least partially, to parties' positions in their party system, so highlighting a core-periphery distinction. Core and periphery appear to display both the different levels and different forms of Euroscepticism. This distinction mirrors an emergent split between cartel parties and non-cartel parties where parties at the core of party systems are benefiting from being in a cartel of governmental parties with the concomitant access to state funding while parties at the peripheries are largely excluded (Katz and Mair, 1995). This not only increases the 'distance' between parties at the core and periphery but also serves as an additional or as a fundamental source of grievance for parties at the edges of their party systems.

European elections have been portrayed as 'second-order' elections, which means that voting for the European Parliament is secondary to national politics and therefore that voting patterns at European levels can, at least partially, be derived from preferences

about domestic politics. An extension of this is that negative party responses to European integration at the domestic level may be expressions of diffuse protest sentiments about issues other than the EU. In other words, the legitimacy of domestic politics and political institutions has an effect on levels of Euroscepticism and Euroscepticism may therefore be partially a measure of domestic political legitimacy.

It is important the European Union is not relegated in this perspective to a residual concept. Understanding Euroscepticism does help us understand parts of the process of European integration. Early works on support for integration stressed the roles of parties in this process (e.g. Haas, 1958) while more contemporary studies have focused on the nature of public support (e.g. Gabel, 1998) and the effects of an international institutional archiceture that allegedly create an 'democratic deficit'. In this sense the study of Euroscepticism is the continuation of existing trends. In another sense, it is a shift in emphasis. By focusing on domestic conflict and party systems in the process of integration, this reflects a shift from the dominance of *polity* (i.e. institutions) and *policies* in the study of the EU to a focus on the *politics* of European integration.

The other application of the study of Euroscepticism is as a contribution to the growing literature on Europeanisation. By mapping and comparing levels and types of Euroscepticism in domestic party systems, it is possible to fit it into the larger consideration of how far different member-state systems are resilient towards or receptive to adaptation to 'European' models of politics. It also relates to a wider process of Europeanisation that includes the effects of non-EU European institutions on domestic polities and the effects of the EU on non-member-states in Europe.

Developing the framework, Aleks Szczerbiak argued that it was important to clarify what precisely is encompassed within the term 'Euroscepticism'. He posited a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism. Hard Euroscepticism involves outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU. Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, involves contingent or qualified opposition to European integration and can, in turn be further sub-divided into 'policy' Euroscepticism and 'national-interest' Euroscepticism.

Policy Euroscepticism is opposition to measures designed to deepen significantly European political and economic integration and is expressed in terms of opposition to specific extensions of EU competencies. However, it is not incompatible with expressing broad support for the project (or a particular model) of European integration. For example, a policy Eurosceptic could be pro-EU but have opposed to the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty or their country's membership of the euro. Policy Euroscpticism is very much a time- and country-specific phenomenon and depends on the particular issues at stake at any given time and the particular stage of the integration process that has been reached or is the subject of debate in any particular country. For example, in Britain, Sweden and Denmark policy Euroscepticism is currently expressed primarily through opposition to the euro while in other countries that are already part of the single currency zone it is focused on other issues such as ceding further powers to supranational EU institutions.

National-interest Euroscepticism, on the other hand, involves employing the rhetoric of defending or standing up for 'the national interest' in the context of internal debates *within* the EU. Again, this kind of soft Euroscepticism is compatible with support in principle for the European project. Indeed it can also (theoretically, at least) encompass those who actually feel sympathetic towards *deepening* European integration, but who also feel the need to employ 'national-interest Eurosceptic' rhetoric to shore up their domestic political support base.

Policy and national-interest Euroscepticism are, of course, not mutually exclusive and can often overlap. For example, in some countries, soft Eurosceptics may portray themselves as (or actually believe that they are) *defending the national interest by opposing specific proposals to extend EU competencies*. For example, the British Conservative Party's 1999 European election slogan 'In Europe But Not Run By Europe' was framed to express both a general national-interest Euroscepticism but also a more specific policy Euroscepticism with regard to British membership of the euro.

Aleks Szczerbiak then went on to propose seven propositions that begin to explain how Euroscepticism impacts on European party system (building on an earlier theoretical framework developed by Paul Taggart, 1998):

1. Only protest parties or factions within mainstream parties are likely to adopt a Hard Eurosceptic stance.

This, of course, begs the question of what we mean by 'protest' and 'mainstream' parties. The distinction between 'protest' and 'mainstream' parties relates to a party's relationship to the established party system and is derived from Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party model. Protest parties are those whose appeal stems either partly or wholly from the fact that they both reject and stand outside the established group of (usually governmental) parties. In other words, they stand outside the existing cartel and are committed to changing the current dynamics of the party system. Mainstream parties, on the other hand, are those that have been parties of government or have attempted to promote themselves as worthy of support because of their proximity to government. In other words, they are 'insiders' that belong to the dominant cartel and are committed to maintaining the existing dynamics of the party systems.

There are some obvious exceptions to this first proposition, the most obvious being regional or separatist parties, for which the EU provides a lever with which they can make the case for 'independence within Europe'.

2. Protest parties incline to adopt a hard Eurosceptic stance as a deliberate means of differentiating themselves from the political mainstream.

The fact that protest parties incline towards hard Euroscepticism is not coincidental but is generally a conscious strategic decision. Euroscepticism is used deliberately as an 'ideological crowbar' to provide a means of distinguishing protest parties from the political mainstream.

3. Most protest parties incline to (to some extent) Euroscepticism and usually as hard Eurosceptics

In other words, not only are protest parties the only ones ever to adopt a Hard Eurosceptic stance but it is also virtually impossible to be protest party without adopting a Eurosceptic (generally a hard Eurosceptic) position.

4. As a corollary, mainstream parties that are threatened with marginalisation within their own party system are likely to avoid taking hard Eurosceptic positions

Just as protest parties wear their hard Euroscepticism with pride as a badge of protest, so mainstream parties will avoid adopting such a position precisely in order to avoid being labelled as a protest party and, therefore, being marginalised within their own party system.

5. However, mainstream parties may sometimes adopt soft Eurosceptic rhetoric to maintain or advance their position within their domestic party system.

The British Conservative Party's increasing use of soft Euroscepticism as a means of shoring up its position within the British party system is an obvious example of this. A possible exception here would appear to be the British Labour Party - a mainstream party that adopted a policy of withdrawal from the EU in the early 1980s. However, arguably it was precisely at the time that Labour adopted this policy in the run up to the 1983 general election that the party had clearly moved outside the mainstream and, as a consequence, was in potential danger of marginalising itself and consigning itself to protest party status. Indeed, one of the party's first acts as part of its attempt to re-establish itself as part of the political extreme was to abandon the policy of withdrawal in the run up to the June 1984 European Parliament elections.

6. Protest parties that move into the political mainstream are likely to abandon hard Euroscepticism but may retain a soft Eurosceptic edge to their discourse.

Perhaps the best of this phenomenon is the Austrian Freedom Party. The Freedom Party originally opposed Austrian membership of the EU but, as it sensed its opportunity to become a party of government and move into the political mainstream, it not only accepted Austrian membership as a given but formally abandoned its opposition to previously unacceptable policies such as eastward enlargement. However, soft Eurosceptic rhetoric remains a key element of the Freedom Party's political discourse and is still evident in terms of its approach to issues such as attempting to prevent unrestricted access to the Austrian labour market by workers from the former communist states. Another example, is Green Parties, such as in Germany, who have softened their Euroscepticism when they have found themselves in governmentwhile retaining a critique of the way that the EU currently functions.

7. The level of electoral support for hard Eurosceptic parties seems to be lower than the appeal of broader mass Eurosceptics

Public opposition to European political and economic integration seems to be generally higher than the level of opposition among party elites. This is illustrated by

the fact that the level of opposition to EU membership found in opinion polls is generally considerably higher than the votes achieve by hard Eurosceptic protest parties in national elections. Indeed, the Danish and French Maastricht referenda revealed that when soft Eurosceptics were included the level of mass Euroscepticism could draw on the support of around half of the electorate.

These propositions were developed with reference to West European party systems. Aleks Szczerbiak then moved on to briefly consider how applicable they were to the new Central and East European party systems. His analysis focused on the impact of the EU issue on the politics of the ten post-communist applicant states where it could reasonably be assumed that Europe would have some kind of meaningful impact on their domestic politics.

Since 1989 support for EU membership has been the subject of an overwhelming consensus among Central and East European political elites. It was underpinned by, and seen as the practical expression of, the notion of 'returning to Europe'. Hard Euroscepticism was largely confined to the fringes of politics, although some soft Euroscepticism was evident among some mainstream parties. Notable examples of the latter include: the Polish Christian National Union and Polish Peasant Party, Vladimir Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, the Hungarian Independent Smallholders Party and Vaclav Klaus' Civic Democratic Party - although even among these parties their anti-EU rhetoric has tended to be relatively muted.

Partly as a result of this overwhelming consensus among political elites and partly because citizensin post-communist states have not really focussed properly on whate exactly joining the EU entails, EU membership has (until recently) been a somewhat distant prospect. Consequently, the European issue has not really been on the political agenda and had little resonance in terms of dividing Central and East European electorates. This has, to some extent, changed with the EU becoming a more significant and contentious issue and is likely to become even more so over the next couple of years. There is, for example, already evidence of this in terms of recent shifts in public opinion in Poland (Szczerbiak, 2000).

An immediate (although not necessarily insurmountable) problem that arises here is identifying what are mainstream and protest parties in the Central and East European context. The cartel party model from which these categories are derived implies a relatively stable pattern of interactions from which 'insiders' and 'outsiders' can be deduced. Such a pattern is not evident in Central and East European party systems that are still relatively unstable and, at best, only partially consolidated.

However, as the EU membership issue obtains a higher profile and becomes more contentious, it may provoke divisions both among and within mainstream parties. Moreover, (if proposition 5 is correct) some of them (or factions within them) may begin to adopt soft Eurosceptic rhetoric as part of their political repertoire. Moreover, we can also expect opposition to EU membership to begin to crystallise and (if proposition 7 is correct) the number of votes obtained by hard Eurosceptic parties to be considerably lower than the levels of support that opponents of EU membership could achieve in accession referenda (although the evidence of accession referenda in all other countries except Norway also show that pro-EU majorities can be mobilised, even against strong tides of Euroscepticism).

Discussion of the presentation focused around the issue of how the 'strange bedfellows' thesis applied to Eastern Europe. The question was how far the Western European model of Euroscepticism bringing together unusual coalitions of otherwise disparate ideological groupings applies to the East European experience. There was also discussion of the roles of ideology and of party system position in determining Euroscepticism, as well as the importance of differentiating between rhetoric and action on Europe by parties. A number of comparative questions were raised including: the differentiation between large and small states; the differentiation between those countries attaining membership of the EU in successive enlargements; the possibility of modeling different patterns of opposition by reference to a number of key variables; and issues of measurement. The key question was how far a model of Euroscepticism with a focus on party system position was better at explaining opposition at the peripheries but less successful at explaining opposition at the core.

The EU and West European party systems

Paul Webb (Brunel University) made a presentation on 'Europe and patterns of intra-party alignment in the British Parliament'. He examined the issue of whether European integration has the capacity to forge a *realignment* of the British party system. Given that voter attitudes on Europe cut across those on class ideology and the undeniable evidence of intra-party discord over Europe since 1990 there were prima facie grounds for suspecting that such a process could occur. However, an alternative possibility might be that the party system was *assimilating* the issue, with party strata simply loyally following leaders on Europe.

The evidence is inconclusive. Survey data and cluster analysis indicate clear relative intra-party cohesion on the issue of European integration at parliamentary level. The existence of such clear differences might point to the capacity of the party system to assimilate the issue. On the other hand, it is also possible that the process of defection, retirement and candidate-selection might imply that an actual realignment has taken place.

Drawing mainly on the 1999 European election results, Nick Startin (Brunel University) argued that the EU issue has the potential to realign the party system and patterns of electoral support within France. European integration is becoming an increasingly salient issue determining voter choice at both national and European elections. There is also evidence of dealignment with all the three major parties suffering electoral decline, while Eurosceptic parties have emerged on the left and right and have been particularly successful in European elections. In particular, a widening rift has developed on the mainstream French Right as the political elites of the two main parties, the UDF and the RPR, have become increasingly converted to the pro-EU consensus while rank-and-file supporters have become progressively sceptical. This contributed to the emergence at the European elections of two new eurosceptic movements, the neo-Gaullist RPF/IE and the rural based Hunting, Fishing, Tradition and Nature Party (CPNT).

The main point raised in the discussion was that voting behaviour in European elections does not always translate into realignments at the level of the national party systems. Some parties that are successful in European elections cannot repeat their

success in national elections, while others simply fade away. In other words, it is possible for two different party systems to co-exist within the same country with different constellations of parties operating in national and European elections.

Euroscepticism in East and Central Europe

Paul Lewis (Open University) made a presentation on 'The Impact of the European Issue on East European Parties', in which he argued that is important to consider the EU as embedded in a wider set of Euro-Atlantic structures. He suggested that there were both empirical and academic reasons for a focus on the CEECs and European integration. Issues of democratisation had largely been played out, most of the countries had experienced three free elections, and most had established stable party systems. It was possible to observe a trend for attitudes towards European integration along the lines of the modernity-traditionalism and state intervention-economic liberalism; the major parties of government were bunching towards liberalism (with attendant support for European integration), while Eurosceptical parties were bunching in opposition around the authoritarian pole. Lewis concluded by raising the issues of how sustainable the pro-European consensus was. He also suggested that we needed to be sensitive to issues of comparability given the different types of party systems and the different degrees of 'party-ness' in the CEECs.

Petr Kopesky (University of Sheffield) presented the results of his research comparing the Czech and Slovak Republics, entitled 'Euroscepticism in the Czech and Party Systems'. He made four broad points. (1) While the EU was no longer ignored by any party, the attention to it was very shallow. A difference between the two countries was that Czech critics had to be far more detailed in backing up their positions whereas the debate in Slovakia has been more abstract and symbolic and less substantive. This was partly a consequence of the different stages of accession of the two countries. (2) No completely Eurosceptic party existed in either the Czech Republic or Slovakia. Where Euroscepticism did occur, it was factional. Support for the EU was invariably qualified, and the positions of the electorate were insufficiently recorded. (3) Concrete stances on European integration depended on parties' positions in their party systems: firstly, in terms of government inclusion (non-governmental parties taking positions opposed to governmental parties); and, secondly, the strongest Eurosceptical positions came from protest (or anti-system) parties. This seemed to suggest that the EU was a 'soft issue'. (4) There was an ideological element to Euroscepticism. Certain parties were Eurosceptic because of their ideological positions on other issues. The intensity with which parties push Euroscepticism may have changed but whether they are, at root, Eurosceptic remains unchanged and dependent on their ideologies.

Discussion based on both presentations focused around a number of issues. One question raised was the potential of ideologies as a source of cleavage compared to divisions over more policy-specific issues. A second issue was the plea to see the image of the EU in terms of CEECs' self-image based on what they might have been like without the communist interlude. Finally, questions were raised about the spatial mapping which stressed the need to construct maps drawn more contextually and related to the primacy of the state in different CEECs. A comparison was drawn with UK Euroscepticism through the observation that in the CEECs there was a consensus about being European, even if there were different attitudes toward the EU. A final point that came up in a number of forms was that the nature of the accession process

was both seen as the only alternative and as yet applied largely by dictat from the EU, so making it difficult for issues to emerge crisply in domestic politics.

Conclusions and future plans

The final session summarised the day and identified some of the key issues that needed to be addressed:

1. Does the proposed framework for analysis help to differentiate only party systems at the periphery rather than those at the core? How does one explain why some mainstream parties adopt soft Eurosceptic rhetoric while others do not?

2. Is there a purely ideological element to some protest parties' Euroscepticism that does not relate to where the party is located in terms of the electoral arena? In other words, do some Eurosceptical parties oppose integration for ideological rather than strategic or pragmatic reasons?

3. Is the hard/soft Euroscepticism distinction a useful one? Is there a continuum rather than distinct categories? Are there enough hard Eurosceptic parties to make it a worthwhile category in terms of research? Is it useful to differentiate opposition to 'Europe as a set of institutions' from opposition to 'Europeanisation'?

4. How might one develop ways of predicting support for or opposition to European integration? Should the model be attempting to do this? Are there examples of certain parties that have used support for European integration as an 'ideological crowbar'?

5. How comparable are West and East European party systems? Does the partial stabilisation and consolidation of the Central and East European party systems (the low level of 'partyness' of the parties and 'systemness' of the system) make it difficult to extend the analytical framework eastwards? Is the EU issue much more tied in with domestic politics in the Central and East European applicant countries?

List of Participants:

Nick Aylott (Keele)
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Sean Hanley (Brunel)
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