



**OPPOSING EUROPE: EURO-SCEPTICISM,  
OPPOSITION AND PARTY COMPETITION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **OPPOSING EUROPE: EURO-SCEPTICISM, OPPOSITION AND PARTY COMPETITION**

Euro-scepticism plays an increasingly significant and controversial role in West European party politics. It features across the political spectrum, and several parties' positions on the European question have changed over time. The present paper sets out a model that casts Euro-scepticism as the 'politics of opposition', rejecting suggestions that it represents a cleavage or a single issue. Hard (principled) and soft (contingent) Euro-scepticism is driven by a combination of a party's identity, policies, electoral strategy and quest for office, in the context of the party system in question. The first pattern of opposition, competition between catch-all parties, is not associated with Euro-scepticism, and if at all only of the soft variety and then in opposition. Parties that adopt the second pattern, cross-cutting opposition based on values or interest, have a greater propensity toward Euro-scepticism, but this may be mitigated by electoral or coalition strategy concerns. Third, opposition at the flanks of the party system links the far left and right to Euro-scepticism in terms of anti-system protest. However, party based Euro-scepticism among flanking parties depends partly on whether other parties have crowded out the Euro-sceptic space. The extent to which changes in strategy and tactics affects policy stances provides a dynamic element that explains changes in party stances on European integration better than merely relying on policy. Party based Euro-scepticism is therefore presented as a product of party strategy, or 'the politics of opposition'.



## **OPPOSING EUROPE: EURO-SCEPTICISM, OPPOSITION AND PARTY COMPETITION**

Euro-scepticism has come to play a remarkable role in European party politics. If there was ever a ‘permissive consensus’ that allowed national party leaderships to pursue European integration without fear of its impact on their electoral fortunes, this is hardly the case in the 2000s.<sup>1</sup> Most West European (and several post-communist) party systems now feature Euro-sceptic parties or factions, and to the extent that this is the case the ‘European question’ has perhaps affected party competition more than any other single issue in the late Twentieth Century. Although it has not given rise to many new parties, compared to post-materialism’s green parties, or prompted wholesale transformation of existing parties the way the collapse of communism did in several cases, the European question has been addressed by and affected almost every European party. It has been incorporated into party platforms, deliberately ignored or circumvented by the use of referendums, it has divided several parties, and has even contributed directly to the collapse of a handful of governments. Its impact across party systems – right, left and centre – suggests that opposition to European integration is perhaps not analysed best as a single issue or question, let alone political cleavage. Euro-scepticism is therefore approached as a broader term that “expresses the idea of contingent or qualified, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration.”<sup>2</sup> In what follows, it is argued that variations in party-based Euro-scepticism in Europe are shaped by differences in patterns of party competition, and that Euro-scepticism is to a considerable extent ‘the politics of opposition’.

Linking Euro-scepticism to patterns of opposition allows for a dynamic model of party-based Euro-scepticism. The central argument is that parties translate questions related to European integration into party competition, and that this entails adaptation to other parties’ strategies. To the extent that party systems freeze into place, this might be “precisely because the parties themselves refuse to be so pinned down” – i.e. they continually adjust their strategies and tactics in response to new challenges or opportunities.<sup>3</sup> The process of European integration represents one of the more significant challenges, and the parties’ responses have been shaped by a combination of their positions on related issues (and ideology), their strategies for electoral competition, and the dynamics of competition between government and opposition. All three factors are closely linked to the parties’ position in the party system. Although long-term policy positions and ideology play a considerable part in shaping a party’s response to the European question, the degree to which party-based Euro-scepticism develops therefore depends largely on strategic and tactical decisions. And even if a party decides to change

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<sup>1</sup> Even Lindberg & Scheingold emphasise the extent to which this consensus was carefully constructed, L. N. Lindberg & S. A. Scheingold, *Europe’s Would-Be Polity: Patterns of Change in the European Community*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> P. Taggart, “A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary West European Party Systems”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 363-388, p.366.

<sup>3</sup> P. Mair, *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p.16.

its strategy or ideology, this may not be recognised or accepted by its opponents. To the extent that this is driven by different patterns of competition between government and opposition, Euro-scepticism is ‘the politics of opposition’.

The arguments developed below are therefore based on the set of incentives that political parties face as they confront questions related to European integration. Starting from a definition of a political party as an organisation that seeks to propel candidates to elected office in pursuit of policy goals (based on Sartori), three broad aims can be distilled from the literature on parties in addition to the basic goal of survival: shaping policy, maximising votes and gaining access to executive office.<sup>4</sup> The first of these concerns both the party’s long term identity and genesis, i.e. a combination of its origin (usually representing a group or set of groups) and its long term policy goals (including, to the extent that it is applicable, ideology). Hence efforts to link von Beymes *familles spirituelles* (party families) with pro- and anti-EU positions, e.g., in one of the more advanced studies, as parties adapt their positions on European integration to developments in the EU with respect to free trade and regulation.<sup>5</sup> However, the compatibility of a party’s policy goals and European integration is but the first building-block for its stance on European integration. It is suggested below that medium-term electoral strategy, particularly the choice between centripetal or centrifugal competition (and efforts respectively to accommodate and to shape voters’ preferences), also shape parties’ incentives to focus on or play down the European question.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the party stances on European integration vary with spells in government and opposition, and play a significant role in several efforts to build and break coalitions. These three factors are therefore combined with a view to setting out a framework for analysis of party-based Euro-scepticism, a model that is dynamic to the extent that party-based Euro-scepticism may change with changes in party strategy or tactics. The central element in this model, which captures the three party goals, is patterns of competition between government and opposition.

## **The European Question and Party System Change - New Cleavage or Opposition Issue?**

The question of how and to what extent European integration has been accommodated in, and affected, national party systems raises the question of what ‘Euro-scepticism’ is. The term has proven somewhat elusive, not least because political competition pertaining to European integration has been cast in terms of existing ideologies, new cleavages, new

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. P. Pennings, “The Triad of Party System Change: Votes, Office and Policy”, in P. Pennings & J. E. Lane (eds.), *Comparing Party System Change*, (London, Routledge, 1998); G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1976); A. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> K. von Beyme *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (Aldersgot, Gower, 1985); see G. Marks & C. Wilson, “National Parties and the Contestation of Europe”, in T. Banchoff & M. P. Smith (eds.), *Legitimacy and the European Union: The Contested Polity*, (London, Routledge, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> On the concepts, see A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1957) and P. Dunleavy, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice: Economic Explanations in Political Science*, (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

issues that cross-cut traditional lines of party competition, as well as a broad range of opposition to the process of European integration. If it is a new cleavage, dimension of political competition or an issue, questions arise as to how European integration is translated into party competition, and particularly whether it cross-cuts or is aligned with existing patterns of competition. However, the range of parties and factions that have adopted Euro-sceptic stances suggest that it might not be a single phenomenon, but a broad set of positions ranging from 'soft' varieties (i.e. contingent or qualified opposition to European integration) to 'hard' principled outright rejection of integration.<sup>7</sup> This in turn suggests that Euro-scepticism may be linked more closely to patterns of opposition than to cleavages.

### *1. Euro-Scepticism, Cleavages and Party System Change*

Although party competition on European issues is sometimes approached in terms of to a pro-/anti-integration cleavage,<sup>8</sup> this is problematic from both a theoretical and empirical perspective. To be sure, if it is interpreted as a new cleavage, the European question *might* be expected to have an impact on domestic party politics. But even here the literature on party system change indicates that it might not be translated into party competition at the domestic level, e.g. if parties try deliberately to keep it out of the national arena (even if it belongs there in terms of the EU's impact on national policy and constitutional arrangements).<sup>9</sup> This problem reflects the de- versus realignment debate in West European politics, i.e. the question of whether post-materialism, feminism and new-politics represent new cleavages that replace the old cleavages that featured in Lipset & Rokkan's 'cleavage model', or merely new issues that arise as old cleavages decline in salience.<sup>10</sup> In the more sociological interpretations of the model, new cleavages should therefore shape party system re-alignment while mere 'issues' would have a less dramatic effect. However, Sartori has long argued that translation of cleavages into politics is a process that requires translators, and the political parties play the central role in this

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<sup>7</sup> P. Taggart & A. Szczerbiak, "Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU the Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe", *Sussex European Institute Working Paper No.46/Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No.2*, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> S. Hix & C. Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union*, (London, Macmillan, 1997), chapter two; K. Derschouwer (1999), "Imagining the European Party System: The Use of Comparisons", 1999-2000 European Forum Conference on Multi-Level Party Systems: Europeanization and the Reshaping of National Political Representation, Conference Paper EUR/12

<sup>9</sup> P. Mair, "The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems", *West European Politics*, 23:4 (2000), 26-51; Mair, *Party System Change*; G. Smith, "A Systems Perspective on Party System Change", *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1:3 (1989), 349-363.

<sup>10</sup> S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: an Introduction", in S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, (London, The Free Press, 1967); R. Rose & D. Urwin, "Persistence and Change in Western Party Systems since 1945", *Political Studies*, 18:3 (1970), 287-319; R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, (Princeton University Press, 1977); M. Pedersen, "The Changing Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility", *European Journal of Political Research*, 7 (1979), 1-26; S. B. Wolinetz, "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems Revisited", *West European Politics*, 2:1 (1979); R. J. Dalton, S. C. Flanagan & P. A. Beck (eds.), *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Realignment or Dealignment?*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984); S. Bartolini & P. Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: the Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

process.<sup>11</sup> Or in Schattschneider's words, "the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power."<sup>12</sup> And with respect to the European question, parties have exercised this instrument with varying degrees of success.

From a theoretical perspective, approaching Euro-scepticism as a cleavage also begs the question of how far the 'cleavage' concept can be stretched in term of accommodating new sets of political divisions. The term is usually associated with deep-seated social structures and cohesive interests, as opposed to the more contingent preferences that are expressed over 'issues'. Most definitions are linked to one of the three categories discussed by Rae & Taylor: i) *ascriptive or 'trait'* cleavages, based on objective criteria; ii) *attitudinal or 'opinion'* cleavages, based on values or ideology; and iii) *behavioural or 'act'* cleavages based on action or membership of organisations.<sup>13</sup> The central question has been whether cleavages are derived primarily from social structures or whether political organisation is more significant. Bartolini & Mair's answer entails defining cleavages as including three elements based on Rae & Taylor's categories: i) an *empirical* element, i.e., objective social structure; ii) a *normative* element, i.e., a more subjective dimension based on values and beliefs; and iii) an *organisational or behavioural* element, i.e., the expression of the cleavage in terms of action or organisation.<sup>14</sup> By this definition, European integration could at best be considered a 'non-structural' cleavage, lacking the empirical element. In comparative West European perspective this is not a problem as such.<sup>15</sup> Regime change *per se* might generate opposition or conflict which features two of the three elements associated with cleavages, a *normative element* and *political organisation*. In this sense, the term has been applied to foreign policy and regime change in countries like Finland and Italy, and more controversially, Ireland.<sup>16</sup> However, in terms of opposition to European integration, even the normative and organisational elements of Euro-scepticism are limited and diffuse (at least beyond elite level).<sup>17</sup> If a cleavage "has to be considered primarily as a *form of*

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<sup>11</sup> G. Sartori, "The Sociology of Parties: A Critical Review", in O. Stammer (ed.), *Party Systems, Party Organisations, and the Politics of New Masses*, (Berlin, Free University of Berlin, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*, (New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), p.68.

<sup>13</sup> D. W. Rae & M. Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> Bartolini & Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability*, p.213ff.

<sup>15</sup> H. Daalder, "Parties, Elites, and Political Developments in Western Europe", in J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966); A. Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> G. Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism", in LaPalombara & Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*; E. Allardt & P. Pesonen, "Cleavages in Finnish Politics", in Lipset & Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*; R. Alapuro, "Finland: An Interface Periphery", in S. Rokkan & D. Urwin (eds.), *The Politics of Territorial Identity: Studies in European Regionalism*, (London, Sage Publications, 1982). R. K. Carty, *Parties and Parish Pump: Electoral Politics in Ireland*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981) argues that the Irish constitutional cleavage was elite-driven, but R. Sinnott, "Interpretations of the Irish Party System", *European Journal of Political Research*, 12:3 (1984), 289-307, disagrees.

<sup>17</sup> R. Sinnott, "Knowledge and the Position of Attitudes to a European Foreign Policy on the Real-to-Random Continuum", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 12:2 (2000), 113-137; R. Sinnott, "Public Opinion and European Integration: Permissive Consensus or Premature Politicization?", in B. L. Nacos, R. Y. Shapiro & P. Isernia (eds.), *Decisionmaking in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion*,

*closure of social relationships*” it is difficult to apply this to the European question without stretching the concept too far to be very useful.<sup>18</sup>

The question is somewhat less problematic in practice, largely because testing for the effect of a cleavage related to European integration does not require distinguishing between *dimensions* and cleavages, and the problem can thus be circumvented. Hix & Lord focus on left-right and integration-sovereignty as the central (orthogonal) dimensions in the European Parliament, in contrast to models that focus on divisions over supranational regulation and liberalism overshadowing or being correlated to this dimension.<sup>19</sup> Testing this, again with reference to the party groups in the EP, Gabel & Hix find that party programmes indicate the dominance of left-right competition, but emphasise that this may be partly because these manifestos avoid sensitive or divisive issues such as integration.<sup>20</sup> In other words, individual national parties’ positions on European integration may differ considerably from the aggregate level of EP party groups and *familles spirituelles*, especially as several parties have changed their positions on the question over the last two or three decades.<sup>21</sup> The empirical problems are greater if the analysis moves from the party level to focus on voters, where Sinnott dismisses the question as ‘non-Europe’ in terms of voter’s lack on knowledge.<sup>22</sup> In short, there is little empirical evidence that the European question represents a cohesive cleavage in terms of either of Bartolini & Mair’s elements. This is not to say that it does not affect national party competition, e.g. in the form of a more diffuse ‘issue’ (which may more easily be taken up by existing parties and accommodated into political competition without changing the party system as such).

## 2. Euro-Scepticism as a ‘Maverick Issue’

If European integration is not a cleavage, there can be little doubt that it constitutes an issue or dimension of political competition. The central question then becomes its role in political competition. Given that Euro-scepticism features across the left-right spectrum

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*and American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Bartolini & Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability*, p.216; R. B. Andeweg, “Towards Representation *Ex Alto* or *Ex Post*”, 1999-2000 European Forum Conference on Multi-Level Party Systems: Europeanization and the Reshaping of National Political Representation, Conference Paper EUR/11.

<sup>19</sup> Respectively Hix & Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union*, chapter two; G. Tsebelis & G. Garrett, “Legislative Politics in the European Union”, *European Union Politics*, 1:1 (2000), 9-36; L. Hooghe & G. Marks, “The Making of a Polity: the Struggle over European Integration”, in H. Kitschelt, P. Lange, G. Marks & J. Stephens (eds.), *The Politics and Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> M. Gabel & S. Hix, “Defining the EU Political Space: An Empirical Study of the European Elections Manifestos, 1979-1999”, paper presented at the Seventh Biennial Conference of the European Community Studies Association, May 31 – June 2, 2001, Madison, WI; S. Hix, “Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics: Cognitive Constraints and Partisan Responses”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 35 (1999), 69-10.

<sup>21</sup> R. Andeweg, “The Reshaping of National Party Systems”, *West European Politics*, 18:3 (1995), 58-78; J. Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*, (London, Routledge, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Sinnott, “Public Opinion and European Integration”; “Knowledge and the Position of Attitudes to a European Foreign Policy on the Real-to-Random Continuum”.

in Western Europe, it may be considered a ‘maverick issue’ that cuts across the mainstream left-right dimension of political competition (if viewed as a single issue). However, “whether an issue is judged conforming or non-conforming is likely to be determined by reference to the characteristics of the party system in question and not just by the nature of the issue itself.”<sup>23</sup> The maverick element derives from the difficulty in absorbing it into left-right party competition and Maor & Smith therefore emphasise the importance of an issue’s ‘squeezability’, i.e. the extent to which it can be defused and accommodated by transforming it from a value-based to resource-related question. Part of the problem in accommodating Euro-scepticism may therefore lie in its bottom-up evolution in the form of anti-elite appeal, as well as its grounding in values rather than merely negotiable resource disputes.

However, it is difficult to aggregate opposition to European integration into a single issue. Much of the problem of defining Euro-scepticism lies in the different issues or ideologies with which it has been associated. Hence Taggart’s above-cited broad definition, centred on opposition to European integration, whether contingent or absolute. When driven by resource-related questions, the European question is readily accommodated into existing party politics, e.g. in the form of left-wing opposition to a free-market EU or right-wing opposition to an ‘over-regulated’ EU.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, value-driven opposition to European integration may be readily accommodated in the existing party system, e.g. by parties that invoke ‘ethnic’ rather than ‘civic’ nationalism as the basis for democracy and therefore resist supranationalism.<sup>25</sup>

### *3. Euro-Scepticism as a Touchstone of Dissent*

European integration is of course more than the sum of the parts of policy integration, and it has drawn tactical, strategic and principled opposition as a project driven by the governing ‘cartel’ of parties.<sup>26</sup> At the tactical level, protest parties have found it useful to add criticism of the mainstream parties’ approach to EU politics to their arsenal of general protest. At the strategic level, several parties have found that their main issues increasingly have a European dimension, whether they are mainstream issues such as economic regulation or more controversial issues ranging from the left socialists’ anti-NATO position to the right’s opposition to immigration. At a third level, principled objections to European integration may be based e.g. on nationalism, concern for democracy or sovereignty, or even internationalist opposition to regional integration. These three levels sit well with Taggart’s four manifestations of Euro-scepticism: single issue anti-EU parties, protest parties that include Euro-scepticism, and established parties with Euro-sceptic positions, which reflect principled, tactical and strategic opposition to

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<sup>23</sup> M. Maor & G. Smith, “On the Structuring of Party Competition: The Impact of Maverick Issues”, (manuscript, The European Institute, LSE, 1993), p.4.

<sup>24</sup> G. Marks (1999), “The Past in the Present: A Cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration”, 1999-2000 European Forum Conference on Multi-Level Party Systems: Europeanization and the Reshaping of National Political Representation, Conference Paper EUR/8.

<sup>25</sup> A. Smith distinguishes between approaches to membership of the nation based on ethnicity and citizenship, *The Ethnic Origins of Nation*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>26</sup> On the cartel concept, see R. S. Katz & P. Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party”, *Party Politics*, 1:1 (1995), 5-28.

European integration respectively. His fourth category, Euro-sceptic factions within mainstream parties, may reflect any of them.<sup>27</sup> To be sure, most parties combine elements of all three types of opposition. The common factor is a degree of dissent, opposition to government policy on European integration.

Hence Taggart's suggestion that party-based Euro-scepticism is not merely a product of policy positions and identity or values, but also parties' "relative position in the political system."<sup>28</sup> "The European issue therefore provides us with a potential touchstone for domestic dissent", ranging from ideological opposition on the part of protest parties to e.g. leadership struggles within established core parties.<sup>29</sup> Euro-scepticism covers a wide range of political dissent and ideological bases for opposition, and its translation into party politics depends on the structure of the party system in general and competition between government and different forms of opposition in particular. A policy position against an EU policy, e.g. protection of fisheries from competition, may be translated into absolute rejection of the EU by an agrarian party in opposition (in Norway) but issue-specific factionalism in a governing party in a majoritarian system (John Major's UK). The UK Labour party's history of scepticism in opposition and pro-integration stances in government until the late 1980s, a pattern that appears to have been adopted by the Conservatives in the 1990s, is a case in point.<sup>30</sup>

The central role of dissent in Euro-sceptic politics indicates a strong potential link with populist anti-elite protest. Both traditional across-the-board anti-establishment populism and 'new populism' have been associated with Euro-scepticism.<sup>31</sup> Inasmuch as the EU has been interpreted as a case of co-operation between national elites, it has drawn populist criticism. Perhaps the most relevant point to extract from the debate on consociational democracy in the EU context is therefore the potential implications of elite co-operation for elite-follower relations.<sup>32</sup> In liberal democracies power-sharing is inherently vulnerable to protest against 'cartel politics'.<sup>33</sup> In this sense Euro-scepticism is readily built around a degree of 'anti-establishment' mobilisation, as in the case of the

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<sup>27</sup> Taggart, "A Touchstone of Dissent", p.368-369.

<sup>28</sup> Taggart, "A Touchstone of Dissent", p.379.

<sup>29</sup> Taggart, "A Touchstone of Dissent", p.384.

<sup>30</sup> N. Ashford, "The Political Parties", in S. George (ed.), *Britain and the European Community: The Politics of Semi-Detachment*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> On concepts and parties, see respectively M. Canovan, *Populism*, (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) and P. Taggart, "New Populist Parties in Western Europe", *West European Politics*, 18:1 (1995), 34-51.

<sup>32</sup> A. Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy", *World Politics*, 31:2 (1969), 207-225; P. Taylor, "The European Community and the State: Assumptions, Theories and Propositions", *Review of International Studies*, 17 (1991), 109-125; M. J. Gabel "The Endurance of Supranational Governance: A Consociational Interpretation of the European Union", *Comparative Politics*, July 1998, 463-475.

<sup>33</sup> A. Pappalardo, "The Conditions for Consociational Democracy: A Logical and Empirical Critique", *European Journal of Political Research*, 9 (1981), 365-390; A. Lijphart, "From the Politics of Accommodation to Adversarial Politics in the Netherlands: A Reassessment", *West European Politics*, 12:1 (1989), 139-153; K. R. Luther, "Austria: From Moderate to Polarized Pluralism?", in D. Broughton & M. Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, (London, Pinter, 1999).

Norwegian periphery.<sup>34</sup> While this explains the broad range of Euro-scepticism in Western Europe from the left-socialists and new politics on the left to new populist right, it also hints at a possible broader relationship between government-opposition competition and Euro-scepticism.

#### *4. Euro-Scepticism and the Politics of Opposition*

Because European integration remains (despite increased supranationalism) a project driven largely by member state governments, opposition to specific measures tends to be the privilege of the opposition. Unsurprisingly, the governments that have negotiated a compromise tend to defend it. The most notable example is probably the confirmation of Commission President Santer, a Christian democrat, by a socialist majority controlled European Parliament in 1994. The vote was carried partly because socialist MEPs from states with centre-left governments were reluctant to reject compromises negotiated by 'their' governments.<sup>35</sup> This holds even more for the treaties inasmuch as these are based to a considerable extent on the 'national interest' as perceived by the governments that negotiate them.<sup>36</sup> Even if this was a project driven by Christian democrats in the original six member states, they took care to dilute resistance from socialist parties through compromise.<sup>37</sup> Milward has argued that integration 'rescued' the nation state, reinforcing its capabilities for governance, and van Kersbergen uses this as the basis arguing for that the EU relies on 'double allegiance' inasmuch as "a national public supports the national political elite in its supranational activities on the condition that these activities serve national social and economic security."<sup>38</sup> By the same logic, Euro-scepticism may derive from the view that integration threatens social, economic or cultural interests, or that groups opposed to the government's policies oppose its supranational agreements by extension.

Even pro-integration parties may face incentives to flirt with Euro-scepticism when in opposition. Even in less adversarial systems than the UK one aspect of the job of the main opposition party is to oppose government policy, and direct support for the government's European initiatives may be therefore be problematic. This problem is, of course, exacerbated to the extent that the party's electorate is divided over European integration and there is a danger that other opposition parties might capitalise on this, or it contains sizeable Euro-sceptic factions. Party discipline is notoriously more difficult to maintain in opposition, if only because the party has fewer positions at disposal with

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<sup>34</sup> B. F. Nelsen, "The European Community Debate in Norway: the Periphery Revolts Again", in B. F. Nelsen (ed.) *Norway and the European Community: The Political Economy of Integration*, (London, Praeger, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> S. Hix & C. Lord, "The Making of a President: The European Parliament and the Confirmation of Jacques Santer as President of the Commission", *Government and Opposition*, 31:1 (1996), 62-76.

<sup>36</sup> To be sure, this is a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective, but even neo-functionalists would be hard pressed to deny this premise. A. Moravcsik, "Preference and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Inter-governmentalist Approach", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31:4 (1993), 473-524.

<sup>37</sup> Lindberg & Scheingold, *Europe's Would-Be Polity*, chapter one; E. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1958), chapter four.

<sup>38</sup> K. van Kersbergen, "Political Allegiance and European Integration", *European Journal of Political Research*, 37 (2000), 1-17, p.9; A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation State*, (London, Routledge, 1992).

which to reward its members and debates about party strategy may be more legitimate in the wake of electoral defeat. Likewise, during the Maastricht referendums pro-integration catch-all parties in opposition in Denmark, France and Ireland found it more difficult to mobilise their supporters than did parties in office.<sup>39</sup> However, the politics of opposition and the incentives for party-based Euro-scepticism differ with different patterns of opposition.

Three broad dimensions of government-opposition competition can be extracted from the comparative West European politics literature.<sup>40</sup> These are closely linked to ideal types of party organisation and strategy. The central dimension in most West European party systems pits the social democrats against one or two non-socialist liberal, conservative or Christian democrat parties. Lipset & Rokkan justifiably assert that whereas “the ‘centre-periphery’, the state-church, and the land-industry cleavages generated national developments in *divergent* directions, [...] the owner-worker cleavages tended to bring the party systems *closer to each other* in their basic structure.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, it formed the basis for the similarities in left-right competition across Western Europe. The differences lay primarily on the non-socialist side, i.e. in the pre-socialist parties of the liberal left and conservative right. The more successful parties on either side of this left-right dimensions broadly followed an evolutionary pattern that took them from mass ‘wing’ parties to catch-all and/or cartel parties as they played down ideology, turned increasingly professional and became more closely linked to the state.<sup>42</sup> To be sure, this is an ideal-type model of party development rather than actual case histories, albeit based on specific parties like the German Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD). The central point is that this dynamic development, including continual adjustment to the adversary’s strategy and success, shapes the incentives for party-based Euro-scepticism. As a rule, when parties have engaged in centripetal competition, this has left limited scope for Euro-scepticism.

Although the first in terms of historical development, competition between liberal and conservative parties was relegated to secondary status in most of Western Europe after the rise of the social democrat left. In several cases the result has been competition between the two as to which party would define the right, thus generating the three-bloc competition characteristic of post-war West Germany or the Netherlands. However, an alternative strategy entailed appeal to specific constituencies based on interest and/or values, denominated ‘territorial opposition’ because it draws on peripheries’ defence of economic interest, culture, values or political autonomy in the face of central

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<sup>39</sup> M. Franklin, M. Marsh, L. McLaren, “Uncorking the Bottle: Popular Opposition to European Unification in the Wake of Maastricht”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 32:4 (1994), 455-472.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966); J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966); G. Smith, *Politics in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, (Aldershot, Gower, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> Lipset & Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments”, p.35.

<sup>42</sup> O. Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of West European Party Systems”, in J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966); Katz & Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy”.

administration and ‘national-builders’.<sup>43</sup> Territorial politics is therefore the second dimension of opposition. This represents a potential basis for an alternative to the catch-all strategy inasmuch as parties may appeal to a target constituency. To the extent that this group sees the state as the main bulwark of defence of its interest, or the EU as a threat, a degree of Euro-scepticism may be expected. Yet few parties have stuck religiously to this ‘ideal type’, and herein lies the countervailing pressures. To the extent that interest-parties extend their electoral appeal toward a catch-all approach or seek to become more attractive coalition partners, they are likely to face incentives to play down any Euro-sceptic stance they may have adopted (if their main rivals are pro-EU).

Third, on the extreme right and left flanks of the party systems, communist and fascist parties extended the spectrum and introduced an anti-system dimension to opposition. Unsurprisingly, most communist and neo-fascist parties have opposed European integration, either as part of western capitalism or as a threat to the nation. Much the same can be said of their more moderate (and more successful) successors, the ‘new politics’ of both the left and right which has taken over and crowded out much of the old extreme right and left’s opposition. Most left-socialist parties have shared left-wing social democrat factions’ opposition to European integration, and several developed as splinter groups from the mainstream centre-left (as anti-integration sentiment formed part of the anti-establishment outlook on which ‘new politics’ drew in the 1970s). On the ‘new populist’ right most parties have adopted a Euro-sceptic stance, in accordance with Taggart’s above-cited ‘touchstone of dissent’ analysis. However, the Scandinavian low-tax, free market, progress parties have a more complex attitude toward European integration, tending to lend support at least to its free market aspects. Moreover, even parties on the flanks face the dilemma of whether to play down their opposition stance in pursuit of votes and office, as has become clear in Italy and Austria in 2001 in the case of the National Alliance (AN) and Freedom Party (FPÖ).

The incentives and dilemmas inherent in these three patterns of oppositions are analysed in further detail below, with a view to establishing patterns of party-based Euro-scepticism, and a model of Euro-scepticism from which testable hypotheses can be extracted.

## **Euro-Scepticism and Left-Right Competition**

The left-right dimension occupies the central role in most party competition in Western Europe, and few of the mainstream parties that define this dimension have adopted Euro-sceptic stances, let alone hard Euro-scepticism. With the possible exception of Irish politics, the left-right dimension has come to be defined by the social democratic parties and their main non-socialist opponents. Even where the communists were the largest party on the left, as in pre-1992 Italy, this is hardly an exaggeration. To be sure, several party systems have seen competition between secular liberal and Christian democrat parties over the role as principal opposition to the social democrats, thereby generating a more triangular pattern of competition, with somewhat different outcomes in Germany

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<sup>43</sup> S. Rokkan & D. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries*, (London, Sage, 1983).

and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in pursuit of votes and emulating their main competitors' successful strategies, a pattern of contagion first from the left (the right emulating the success of mass party organisations as a tool for mobilising voters) and subsequently from the right (the left adapting to the challenge from catch-all parties that focus less on ideology) could be discerned across Western Europe.<sup>44</sup> This pattern also characterises Irish politics, despite its small labour party.<sup>45</sup> It is precisely this pattern of left-right competition, focussing on issues or leadership and competence rather than ideology, that provides a poor basis for Euro-scepticism. Only to the extent that the centre-right and centre-left parties have abandoned the centripetal Downsian strategy for a more centrifugal (preference-shaping) strategy have they even been able to consider accommodating Euro-scepticism. This reflects not only their organisational basis, ideology and policy preferences, but also their electoral strategy and frequent role as governing parties. However, in opposition, particularly as a direct consequence of electoral defeat, strategic questions are prone to be re-opened and incentives for 'soft' Euro-scepticism may emerge.

In terms of ideology, policy preferences and organisation, the causal link is not simply between centre-right or -left status and lack of Euro-scepticism as much as between the catch-all strategy and limited opposition to European integration. The Christian democrat (Catholic) ideology is perhaps the one most compatible with supranational decision making, inasmuch as its subsidiary principle and multi-level authority makes it easier to accommodate national and EU level decision making than the more state-centred conservative (and Protestant) and social democrat ideologies.<sup>46</sup> Despite the degree of consensus on European integration established in the original six member states, several of the main parties in the EFTA states adopted more sceptical positions. Britain's Labour and Conservative parties both found ideological reasons to greet the integration project with less than full enthusiasm, based on concern that it might undermine the British welfare states and Empire (or at least Commonwealth links) respectively.<sup>47</sup> The same logic caused considerable divisions among the Scandinavian social democrat parties, divided over their effort to establish social democratic economic policy at home but, in the Norwegian and Danish case, also commitment to European integration (during the Cold War, the Swedish party saw EU membership as incompatible with neutrality).<sup>48</sup> By contrast, the three countries' conservative right came out in favour of full participation in European integration. In short, ideologically, a degree of scepticism could be accommodated, especially in states outside the core six, but there has never been much solid basis for principled opposition to European integration.

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<sup>44</sup> M. Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State*, (London, Methuen & Co, 1954); D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (London, Pall Mall Press, 1967); Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of West European Party Systems".

<sup>45</sup> Ireland D. M. Farrell, "Ireland: Centralization, Professionalization, and Competitive Pressures", in R. Katz & P. Mair (eds.), *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*, (London, Sage Books, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> B. F. Nelsen, J. L. Guth & C. R. Fraser (2001), "Does Religion Matter? Christianity and Public Support for the European Union", *European Union Politics*, 2:2, 191-217.

<sup>47</sup> Ashford, "the Political Parties".

<sup>48</sup> See country chapters in L. Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*, (London, Routledge, 1996).

Part of the explanation for the catch-all parties' position on European integration lies in the economic interest associated with the catch-all strategy for electoral appeal. Hix's suggestion that, for party groups in the European Parliament, "the location of class and sectoral interest limits the options for party differentiation in the Integration-Independence dimensions" applies almost as well to national centre-left and -right parties.<sup>49</sup> A pro-EU social democrat stance can attract the centre-right owners of 'Euro-champions' or globally competitive industry and the financial sector, and a similar centre right stance can attract workers in industries that stand to benefit from integration. However, an anti-EU stance appealing to workers in domestic (i.e. relatively uncompetitive) sectors is unlikely to attract owners in these sectors, and vice versa, because vulnerable/uncompetitive groups tend to seek protection both from international competition and their domestic 'class' opponents. In other words, it is easier to build a cross-class alliance in favour of integration than against it. Only in cases where European integration could be presented as lying considerably to the right (for Scandinavian, and in opposition, UK social democrats before the Single European Act) or left (UK conservatives after the SEA) of the party's domestic agenda could this prompt soft Euro-scepticism. The exception to this rule would be a clearly delineated sector, represented by its own party (i.e. not a catch-all strategy), and this is taken up in the context of territorial opposition, below.

Finally, the catch-all parties' quest for executive office reinforces this tendency toward pro-EU positions. It is almost tautological to point out that had the governing parties of the 1950s not favoured European integration it would not have taken place, as was of course the case in the EFTA states. However, the point is significant inasmuch as once the European institutions were up and running the main (centre-left) opposition parties in the six original member states were all but required to accept this *fait accompli* in order to become credible competitors for office. This was an absolute precondition for the Christian Democrats' co-operation (historical compromise) with the Communists in Italy in the mid-1970s.<sup>50</sup> To be sure, the project of European integration was designed to accommodate the mainstream opposition's concerns and generate consensus, but the fact remains that joining a pro-EU coalition as a Euro-sceptic party is difficult and has tended to either prompt moderation or break the coalition. In the one case where a Euro-sceptic mainstream party gained office in a member state – Pasok in Greece in 1981 – it quietly dropped its Euro-sceptic stance.<sup>51</sup> In Italy, Berlusconi's centre-right government's current controversies over European integration drive the point home.

Apart from periods of opposition, the principal enduring exceptions to the rule that the main centre-right and -left parties tend to eschew Euro-scepticism are cases where the party has not adopted a catch-all strategy or where over-riding ideological or policy concerns prevent a pro-EU stance. The Swedish Social Democrat party provides the best case, and combines both factors. It maintained the 'Erlander doctrine' that Swedish neutrality was incompatible with membership between 1961 and 1990, and the party was

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<sup>49</sup> Hix, "Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics", p.80.

<sup>50</sup> G. Andreotti, *De (prima) Re Publica: Ricordi*, (Milano, Rizzoli, 1996), chapters two and three.

<sup>51</sup> S. Verney, "The Greek Socialists", in Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*.

more a collection of interests than a de-ideologued catch-all party.<sup>52</sup> The Icelandic parties, none of which came out in favour of EU membership during the debates in the early 1990s, illustrate the point about policy concerns (cost-benefit analysis), although the Social Democrats have since come to favour membership.<sup>53</sup> Even the agrarian Progressive Party is now moving toward favouring EU membership, although their more Euro-sceptic conservative Independence Party coalition partner is keeping the issue off the agenda. However, periods in opposition relax many of the incentives against Euro-scepticism. Although policy preferences may remain stable, catch-all parties are by nature broad churches that include factions that pull the party towards more centrifugal strategies. In the wake of electoral defeat, these factions are both more difficult to control and have more legitimate grounds for challenging the leadership. For John Major's Conservatives in the UK this even held in the case of the severely reduced majority of 1992-1997. To be sure, this was exacerbated by the fact that most EU governments were led by centre-left parties, much as the reverse was the case for British and Scandinavian social democrats in the 1980s (until Labour began to see the EU as a counterweight to Thatcherism). Moreover, as Foote, Hague and Duncan-Smith illustrate, Euro-scepticism appears to be more closely associated with centrifugal electoral strategies. In short, with few but significant exceptions, Euro-scepticism tends not to be a feature of the main parties competing along the left-right dimension. When it occurs, which is almost exclusively in opposition, this tends to be the 'soft' variants of 'Euro-scepticism'.

## **Euro-scepticism and Territorial Opposition**

The roots of the second dimension of opposition run to the territorial cleavages discussed by Lipset & Rokkan – the centre-periphery cleavages derived from the 'national revolution' and the rural-urban cleavages that arose during the industrial revolution.<sup>54</sup> In Western Europe both were usually translated into party politics before the rise of the socialist left, sometimes in alignment with state-church or regime change cleavages.<sup>55</sup> The politics of territorial opposition, in the shape of cleavages translated into party politics, therefore draws on both economic interest and cultural identity or values.<sup>56</sup> However, in most West European states the social democrat left emerged as the main opposition in the Twentieth Century, shaping the main left-right dimension around issues

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<sup>52</sup> L. Svåsand & U. Lindström, "Scandinavian Parties and the European Union", in Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*; G. Esping-Andersen, "Single-Party Dominance in Sweden: The Saga of Social Democracy", in T. J. Pempel (ed.), *Uncommon Democracies: The One-Party Dominant Regimes*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> G. H. Kritstinson, "Iceland and The European Union: Non-Decision on Membership", in Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*.

<sup>54</sup> Lipset & Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments", p.14.

<sup>55</sup> On regime change as a cleavage, see H. Daalder, "Parties, Elites, and Political Developments in Western Europe", in J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966); G. Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism", in the same volume; E. Allardt & P. Pesonen, "Cleavages in Finnish Politics", in Lipset & Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*.

<sup>56</sup> S. Rokkan & D. Urwin, "Introduction: Centres and peripheries in Western Europe", in S. Rokkan & D. Urwin (eds.), *The Politics of Territorial Identity: Studies in European Regionalism*, (London, Sage Publications, 1982).

related to state ownership of the means of production, the state's role in the economy, the scope of the welfare state and political redistribution of resources.<sup>57</sup> Hence the strategic dilemma facing the old parties – whether to compete along this 'first' dimension of government-opposition competition, or stake out an interest- or value-based position along a second dimension of competition.

### *1. Territorial Opposition as Party Strategy*

The long-term strategic choice faced by West European parties, between catch-all and interest-based organisation and electoral competition, is therefore more important than genesis or affiliation with party *familles spirituelles*. To be sure, most parties that have chosen to compete along a second dimension of opposition, usually cross-cutting the left-right dimension, belong to either von Beyme's 'liberal and radical', 'agrarian' or 'regional and ethnic' party families. However, in some cases these parties followed their main competitors' evolution toward the ideal-type catch-all or cartel party, including not only organisational change toward a more professional party, but also playing down defence of special or sectional interest and ideology in favour of focus on issues or leadership competence. In others they retained a more specialised focus on a niche electoral market, be it interest-, identity- or value-driven. Whereas post-war Christian democrats in Italy or Germany may have used the state-church issue to reinforce their competition with the left, most Scandinavian agrarian and liberal parties distanced themselves from the conservative-social democrat government-opposition dimension. In terms of party strategy, these parties rejected the ideal-type evolution toward the catch-all party, remaining what can broadly be called 'interest-parties'.

This primacy of party strategy over cleavages suggests the possibility of new parties emerging along the territorial dimension. If the defining feature is rejection of the catch-all strategy and focus on peripheral economic interest, cultural identity or values, in opposition to the 'cartel' parties on the centre-right and -left, the Danish and Swedish Christian parties that emerged on the scene in the 1970s and 1980s and Bossi's Northern League in Italy would qualify as territorial opposition. Although the latter shares some characteristics with the new populist right, its regional economic interest and anti-Rome rhetoric would qualify it as at least partly territorial opposition. With a view to explaining patterns of party-based Euro-scepticism, patterns of opposition are more telling than *familles spirituelles*.

### *2. The Strategy of Territorial Opposition and Euro-Scepticism*

The first building-bloc in the strategy of territorial opposition is therefore at least partial rejection of competition along the mainstream socio-economic dimension as defined by the two largest parties that dominate the party system (usually both catch-all parties). Although territorial opposition usually involves alignment along the left-right dimension – hence the Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish agrarian parties' name changes to 'centre'

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<sup>57</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984) chapter eight.

in the late 1950s early 1960s – it is based on attaching greater salience to issues derived from cross-cutting cleavages based on territorial or cultural identity or interest. The central questions as far as their susceptibility to Euro-scepticism is concerned are whether the main centre-left or -right parties have already crowded out the Euro-sceptic space, and whether the territorial opposition perceives European integration as a threat to its interests, values or identity. The latter depends to no small extent on whether the state is perceived as a bulwark for defence of territorial interests. Even if the political centre is seen as a threat, the EU could be portrayed as an even greater danger than the existing state inasmuch as it is perceived as a potential ‘super-state’. The first variable that shapes the scope for territorially based Euro-scepticism is therefore the main parties’ stance on European integration. In most West European states they have not invoked it, and there is ample scope for territorial or protest-based opposition parties to invoke Euro-scepticism.

The second building-bloc is the focus on territorial opposition – based on identity, political opposition or economic interest, or a combination of all three. As a strategy of opposition, each represents a potential source of party-based Euro-scepticism. The central questions with respect to Euro-scepticism are whether they perceive the state as the key defender of interests and values, the EU seen as a cosmopolitan threat to national identity and whether EU membership entails policy costs or benefits in terms of specific policies (regional, agriculture). Drawing on Rokkan & Urwin’s analysis, centre-periphery politics is subdivided into three dimensions, cultural, political and economic.<sup>58</sup> To be sure, most parties that focus on territorial opposition invoke more than one aspect, but with respect to Euro-scepticism they warrant analytical separation.

Territorial opposition based on culture or identity usually entails religious dissent or ethnic/national minority status. The nationalist or ethnic minority parties are the least problematic in terms of Euro-scepticism. They could be expected to perceive European integration instrumentally in terms of their goals of autonomy or independence, and see the EU as an ally in quest for devolution. Data from Ray’s expert survey of 1996 supports this inasmuch as no national/ethnic minority party registers as Euro-sceptic.<sup>59</sup> Cultural dissent is more problematic, particularly in the form of more ‘fundamentalist’ shape that formed the basis for the Scandinavian Christian parties.<sup>60</sup> To the extent that the state is seen as the protector of culture or identity, and cosmopolitan regional integration as a threat, Euro-scepticism should of course be expected. However, if the state or political-administrative centre is seen as a cosmopolitan threat, the EU may be perceived as an extension of this threat. The relationship between territorial opposition based on culture and identity and Euro-scepticism is therefore to a large extent dependent on the party’s interpretation of the nature of the European integration project.

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<sup>58</sup> Rokkan & Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity*.

<sup>59</sup> The Flemish Bloc in Belgium scores 3.5 on a 1-7 anti/pro-EU scale, equalling the UK Conservatives. L. Ray, “Measuring Party Orientations towards European Integration: Results from an Expert Survey”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 36 (1999), 283-306. The survey does not cover Northern Ireland, where the Democratic Unionist Party takes a sceptic stance toward the EU.

<sup>60</sup> L. Karvonen, “Christian Parties in Scandinavia: Victory over the Windmills?”, in D. Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, (London, Pinter, 1994).

Politically driven territorial opposition combines opposition to administrative centralisation of power with defence of local or regional interests or values. Resistance to central government is cast in terms of defence of local self-rule and local interests, usually linked to identity and culture or economic interests. The potential for opposition-driven Euro-scepticism parallels that of cultural territorial opposition, i.e. it is based on perceptions of European integration as a potential threat to local autonomy. Given the Commission's focus on regional government, the incentives should, in most cases, point toward welcoming European integration. Nevertheless, 'Brussels' has sometimes been cast as an extension of 'distant central government', notable by the Norwegian agrarian Centre Party which perceives European integration as an undesirable centralising process.

Economically based territorial opposition should be the least problematic of the three bases of opposition with regard to the potential for Euro-scepticism inasmuch as it entails a simple cost-benefit analysis. The question, to which the Norwegian and Finnish 'centre' electorate and the Norwegian party answered 'no', is: are agricultural and regional policy subsidies expected to be greater under the EU regime? Given that redistribution of resources, such as protection of agriculture and fisheries, should be more easily negotiable than culture or identity, this form of Euro-scepticism should be more contingent on EU rules than the cultural or political dimensions of territorial opposition. However, in its present form, the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies have limited attraction to primary industry in Norway and Finland, whereas the Danish (Agrarians) Liberals have long been pro-EU and changes to Swedish agricultural policy prompted the farmers' organisation to favour EU membership before the Centre party did.<sup>61</sup> In Iceland, the agrarian Progressive Party's more positive stance on EU membership in early 2002 is driven partly by reassessment of fisheries policy in the light of the implications of EU enlargement.

### *3. Countervailing Pressure: Tactical Euro-Scepticism and the Quest for Votes or Office*

The third building-bloc in the strategy of territorial opposition has considerable potential to work against Euro-scepticism. If the long- and medium-term goals of political parties that compete along the territorial dimension of government-opposition competition include organisational survival and policy goals cast in terms of defence of territorial interest, identity and values, the more short term tactical goals of maximising votes and gaining access to executive office do not necessarily push or pull in the same direction. If their medium term strategies are based on differentiation from the catch-all parties, immediate electoral competition and compromise in coalition government may require the exact opposite – emulation of catch-all party tactics.

The quest for votes beyond the territorially based niche market should provide incentives for an interest-based party to move toward a catch-all strategy. Assuming that it has proved at least moderately competent in mobilising its core supporters, an interest-based

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<sup>61</sup> I. Barnes, "Agriculture, Fisheries and the 1995 Nordic Enlargement", in L. Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*, (London, Routledge, 1996); L. Lundgren Rydén, *Ett Svenskt Dilemma: Socialdemokraterna, Centren och EG-frågan 1957-1994*, (Göteborg, Avhndlingar från Historiska institutionen in Göteborg 23, 2000).

party that seeks to extend its voter appeal will be under pressure to dilute its ideological appeal if its is to attract voters from its catch-all competitors. Even interest-based parties are not immune from Kirchheimer's dynamics of competition. In the present model the politics of territorial opposition is linked explicitly to a non-catch-all party strategy. The party's goals in terms of policy and organisational survival are therefore addressed in terms of focussing on a more or less clearly defined constituency, as opposed to the catch-all party's non-ideological appeal based on accommodating the majority of the electorate. However, both are ideal-types, and most interest-based parties feature internal debates over party strategy.<sup>62</sup>

Likewise, the quest for participation in governing coalitions is expected to exert a moderating effect inasmuch as a Euro-sceptic party faces a trade-off between policy and office. A number of Norwegian centre-right governments have collapsed over the 'European Question', driving the point home forcefully.<sup>63</sup> In a party system where the centre-right is divided over European integration, even presenting a credible governing alternative provides incentives to play down the European question. To be sure, this may be the weakest of all the incentives built in to the Euro-scepticism-as-opposition model, but it suggests considerable potential constraints on Euro-sceptic parties in office. Yet in 1994, Finnish Prime Minister and Centre Party (KESK) leader Aho pushed a pro-membership position through a highly divided party, threatening to resign from both his posts, a move motivated partly by keeping the coalition intact.<sup>64</sup>

## **Euro-Scepticism and Flank Opposition**

Perhaps the most ubiquitous form of Euro-scepticism is that found at the flanks of the system. Because this group of parties is the least cohesive (and actually is almost a residual category) it features the full range from soft through strategic to hard Euro-scepticism. Whereas most of the parties that emerged as territorial opposition have positioned themselves along the left-right dimension and attempt to capture votes from the main parties, thus engaging in a degree of catch-all appeal, most of the parties on the flanks of the party system have maintained a degree of anti-system appeal. To be sure, this is partly the product of the strategies pursued by the core parties, inasmuch as the catch-all or territorial parties may crowd out the Euro-sceptic space. Moreover, despite the general tendency toward Euro-scepticism on the flanks, the Scandinavian far right provides exceptions.

The flanking parties' identity and ideology, and in many cases genesis, accounts for much of this Euro-scepticism. Unsurprisingly given their anti-system posture and opposition to free market economic policy, most West European communist parties long

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<sup>62</sup> D. Arter (ed.), *From Farmyard to City Square? The Electoral Adaptation of the Nordic Agrarian Parties*, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>63</sup> Two non-socialist coalitions collapsed in the run-up to the EU applications (Borten 1971, Syse 1990), and Bondevik's Euro-sceptic minority government fell in 2000, failing to push through its own policies.

<sup>64</sup> T. Raunio, "Facing the European Challenge: Finnish Parties Adjust to the Integration Process", *West European Politics*, 22:1 (1999), 138-159.

opposed European integration. This came to represent a problem when the Italian and Spanish communist parties turned pro-regime, including pro-EU, a proclamation that the Spanish ‘insider’ parties accepted as genuine far more rapidly than their Italian counterparts.<sup>65</sup> Much the same can be said for the Fini’s (post-fascist) National Alliance (AN) in Italy. However, their more moderate successors on the ‘new politics’ or green left and populist right feature more complex attitudes to European integration, often of a ‘softer’ variety. On the right this may be a matter of more or less open xenophobic nationalism.<sup>66</sup> Yet this is sometimes mirrored on the left in a combination of concern for sovereignty (reflecting the Stalinist ‘socialism-in-one-country’ approach) and an internationalist orientation that condemns all actual efforts as western capitalist projects (which could be called ‘internationalism-in-one country’).<sup>67</sup>

The origins of most of the new left and populist right parties and their strategies for electoral competition reinforce any ideological tendencies they may have towards Euro-scepticism. The parties’ relative position in the party system is therefore a crucial variable. Given that they have developed as protest parties since the 1960s, opposition to the central cartel and consensual government has played a vital role in shaping the identity of most of the new left and populist parties. Whether opposition to European integration has become part of this protest depends on the extent to which Euro-scepticism has already been crowded out by existing parties competing on the left-right or territorial dimension, and whether the new parties broke with the main parties over issues that include European integration. Because most green and left socialist parties developed as left-wing opposition to or splinters from mainstream pro-EU social democrat parties, emphasising post-materialism and critical of free market economics or even pursuit of economic growth for its own sake, their opposition to European integration can hardly be as surprising as the moderate pro-EU stance adopted by some of the green parties.<sup>68</sup> By contrast, the free market orientation that formed the bases for the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties’ anti-tax protest against social democratic economic policy provided a modifying factor, at least until the EU embarked on Economic and Monetary Union (perceived as excessive regulation). Nevertheless, the continental party systems have bred a set of far-right and -left parties that feature a harder form of Euro-scepticism. In contrast to the mainstream parties, and even some territorial parties, the flanking parties tend to feature centrifugal electoral competition, and therefore face few incentives in the form of electoral competition to moderate Euro-sceptic platforms.

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<sup>65</sup> A. Bosco, *Comunisti: Trasformazioni di Partito in Italia, Spagna e Protogallo*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> C. Fieschi, J. Shields & R. Woods, “Extreme Right-Wing Parties and the European Union: France, Germany and Italy”, in Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*.

<sup>67</sup> D. A. Christensen, “The Left-Wing Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden: Cases of Euro-Phobia?”, *West European Politics*, 19:3 (1996), 525-546; D. A. Christensen, “Foreign Policy Objectives: Left Socialist Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden”, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 21:1 (1998), 51-70.

<sup>68</sup> W. Rüdiger, “Green Parties and the European Union”, in Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*.

There is some evidence that, as in the case of territorial opposition, competition for office and membership of coalitions provides countervailing forces. Although the Norwegian and Danish Progress Parties developed as protest parties, they have developed into more serious challenges to the conservative right.<sup>69</sup> Taking an openly Euro-sceptic stance would ruin the parties' aspirations for participation in governing coalitions of the right. The Norwegian, Danish and Italian parties have all discarded some of their more extreme elements in high-profile splits over the last years. The National Alliance (AN) and Freedom Party's (FPÖ) entering government in Italy and Austria suggests that open Euro-scepticism is, if not incompatible with government, at least problematic. The caveat is that radical flanking parties, particularly on the left, run the risk of alienating their voters if they pursue such a strategy.<sup>70</sup>

## **Conclusion - Euro-Scepticism as the Politics of Opposition**

The central hypotheses regarding patterns of party-based Euro-scepticism are therefore based on a model of 'Euro-scepticism as the politics of opposition', where patterns of competition shape the translation of the European question into party politics. Party-based Euro-scepticism is therefore a product of parties' strategic choices in the light of survival, ideology, organisation and the pursuit of office. This means that it cannot be understood outside the context of the party system, i.e. patterned interaction between political parties that compete for office or to influence policy. And these goals present a dilemma for most political parties. On the one hand ideology and interests shape a party's stance on European integration based on specific policy or constitutional issues, on the other, efforts to participate in government or present critical opposition may pull in the opposite direction. Differences in party-based Euro-scepticism therefore depend both on parties' interests and on their relative position in the party system. While interests and ideology is a more long-term variable, competition between government and opposition may be expected to have a more immediate impact on a party's Euro-sceptic stance. In other words, party-based Euro-scepticism cannot be expected unless it is combined with one of three dimensions of opposition. This indicates a range of Euro-scepticism running from pro-EU parties in office to Euro-sceptic parties in opposition, but which includes more complicated combinations like pro-EU parties in opposition and Euro-sceptic parties that are in or aspire to office.

The first factor in explaining party-based Euro-scepticism is the competition between the catch-all parties, which shape the dominant left-right dimension of competition. Here Euro-scepticism is generally not expected, although it may emerge in a 'softer' form during periods of opposition. However, if one or more adopt Euro-sceptic stances, the scope for territorial or 'flank' Euro-scepticism is reduced considerably. To be sure, an interest-based (e.g. agrarian) party may still face incentives to adopt a Euro-sceptic stance based on policy or values, but much of the 'opposition' logic for Euro-scepticism

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<sup>69</sup> R. Harmel & L. Svåsand, "The Influence of New Parties on Old Parties' Platforms: the Cases of Progress and Conservative Parties in Denmark and Norway", *Party Politics*, 3:3 (1997), 315-340.

<sup>70</sup> B. Ardal argues that this cost the Norwegian Socialist Left dearly in the 1993 election, "The 1994 [sic] Storting Election: Volatile Voters Opposing the European Union", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 17:2 (1994), 171-180.

disappears. Second, party-based Euro-scepticism along the second dimension of competition is driven by the politics of territorial opposition. To the extent that the state is seen as the main bulwark in defence of territorial identity, values or interests, this dimension of opposition readily forms the basis for party-based Euro-scepticism. The non-economic aspect of opposition may be based on religious or regional identity, and/or opposition to supranational governance; the economic aspect on the economic costs or benefits of membership. Third, depending on the extent to which the Euro-sceptic positions have been adopted by other parties, parties on the left and right flanks may face incentives to adopt Euro-scepticism as part of their opposition or protest profile. Inasmuch as this squares with nationalist or left-socialist ideology, it makes 'hard' Euro-scepticism more likely here than at the centre of the left-right spectrum. Nevertheless, although the logic of opposition may provide incentives for party-based Euro-scepticism, the logic of government is likely to operate against this. The two main incentives for playing down Euro-scepticism, which provide the dynamic part of the model, include extension of the party's electoral appeal and participation in coalition government.

Three broad hypotheses can be extracted from this 'Euro-scepticism as the politics of opposition' model. First, principled Euro-scepticism is not expected to characterise catch-all or cartel parties that compete along the main (socio-economic) left-right dimension. To be sure, moderate Euro-scepticism, in the form of opposition to specific policy proposals, is not necessarily problematic, but opposition to further integration in principle is difficult when part-taking in what is largely a government-driven integration process. However, in opposition the degree of Euro-scepticism depends on the strategy for competition, with Euro-scepticism associated with moves toward adversarial (centrifugal) rather than centripetal Downsian catch-all strategies. Second, interest- or value-based parties' propensity toward Euro-scepticism should be driven by the extent to which they perceive the state as their ally or threat. The second dimension of opposition, interest- or identity-driven opposition to the left-right mainstream, is perhaps the most interesting with regard to party-based Euro-scepticism. Euro-scepticism is related to and driven by territorial, cultural or primary industry-oriented *opposition*, not merely cleavages or parties as such. Unless this dimension is translated into competition by a party that challenges the policies of the mainstream catch-all parties, Euro-scepticism cannot be expected. Third, both ideological and populist anti-establishment positions and the 'touchstone of dissent' strategy links the flanking new politics and new populist parties to Euro-scepticism. However, the present model suggests that this is driven largely by their opposition or protest strategy. This, in turn, is developed in the context of the mainstream parties' strategies and adaptation to the new challenges, as well as the extent to which 'dissent' stances have been adopted by older issue-oriented parties. Finally, along both the second and third dimension of competition, Euro-sceptic parties should be expected to modify or avoid Euro-scepticism to the extent that they aspire to or actually participate in governing coalitions. This reflects the dynamic element in the model, changes in party-based Euro-scepticism as strategies of opposition and coalition building develop. Party-based Euro-scepticism is therefore a product of party strategy.



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