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BEYOND GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION? THE EUROPEAN QUESTION, PARTY STRATEGY AND COALITION POLITICS IN NORWAY

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The British application for membership of the European Economic Community in July 1961 came less than two months before the election that cost the Labour party its parliamentary majority and inaugurated four decades of minority and coalition government. Not only did the British application place the controversial question of whether to apply for EEC membership on the Norwegian Labour (and now minority) administration's agenda, it introduced a question that has cast a shadow over coalition politics ever since. Participation in European integration has long divided both the centre-right and centre-left wings of the party system, and with the 2005 election a year and a half away it continues to do so more than ever. With the leaders of the two mainstream centre-left and -right parties both declaring that application for membership of the European Union is more important than coalition politics, and their respective potential coalition partners prioritising opposition to EU membership, the scene is set for intense coalition games and negotiations in the run-up to the 2005 elections and in all likelihood yet another minority government that builds alliances in different directions on economic and foreign policy questions.

Party strategy lies at the heart of the question of the impact of the European question on the making and breaking of coalitions. In the classical party politics literature a party's key aims were the pursuit of votes and office.¹ This has since been supplemented by focus on the importance of internal party management and organisational survival, and the pursuit of policy, which in turn shapes both coalition games and the pursuit of votes.² The key problem is that maximising one goal may entail merely satisficing another, or even fully-blown trade-offs, and herein lies the dilemmas of party strategy.³ Taking a leaf out of the disciplines of military and business studies, strategy may be defined as the link between goals and their achievement or, paraphrasing Porter, as a broad formula for how a party is going to compete – a combination of what its ends should be and by which means these should be pursued.⁴ In Scandinavia, the major parties have adopted three broad sets of strategies for competition, which go a long way toward explaining variations in their approaches to Euro-scepticism, to the extent that Euro-scepticism may be considered

¹ A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1957); W. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962).

² A. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988); A. De Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation*, (Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1973); I. Budge & M. J. Laver, "Office Seeking and Policy Pursuit in Coalition Theory", *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 11:4 (1986), 485-506; P. Dunleavy, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice: Economic Explanations in Political Science*, (London, Harvester, 1991).

³ K. Strom, "A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties", *The American Journal of Political Science*, 34 (2), 565-598; W. C. Müller & K. Strom, "Political Parties and Hard Choices," in W. C. Müller & K. Strom (eds.), *Policy, Office or Votes? How Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴ C. von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, (Berlin, Dümmlers Verlag, 1832); M. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, (New York, The Free Press, 1980).

'the politics of opposition'.⁵ When Norwegian voters rejected participation in European integration the second time in a referendum in November 1994, both party competition and voter alignments seemed almost frozen in time since 1972. The 'No' vote decreased from 53.5% to 52.2 percent, and the 'Yes' vote rose imperceptibly from 46.5% to 47.%. Region by region the voting patterns turned out to be slightly more polarised in 1994 than twenty-two years earlier. Formal party positions barely differed, the same parties opposed EU membership in 1972 and 1994. Although party positions still reflect, with few but significant exceptions, their positions three decades ago, most Norwegian parties are reassessing both their strategies for competition and opposition to participation in European integration with a view to the 2005 election and forthcoming referendum.⁶

In what follows, the evolution of the party politics of European integration in Norway over four and a half decades is analysed, with a view to assessing the impact of the European question on party politics and to the forthcoming 2005 election. The issues that have been raised in connection with the European question in Norway are identified and their impact on party strategy is addressed in the first and second sections, with the second section outlining three broad and enduring sets of strategies. The third section analyses the development and changes in party-based Euro-scepticism, and addresses their impact of coalition politics in Norway.

The European Question in Norway

The question of how and to what extent Norway should participate in European integration has proven remarkably persistent in Norwegian politics since it was first raised when the UK applied to join the EU in 1961. Whereas Denmark and Ireland quickly followed the UK's lead in July 1961, the Norwegian Labour government prevaricated. When it applied in May 1962, it sent mixed signals about its willingness to accept the Treaty of Rome without exemptions.⁷ The question would later split the party. In any case, De Gaulle's veto on UK membership put a premature end to the debate in January 1963, and again in 1967. The question returned only after De Gaulle's departure in 1969, when it rose to the top of the political agenda and dominated Norwegian politics until the September 1972 referendum. Following the 'No' vote, the issue remained completely off the agenda until the EU reinvigorated integration with the Single European Act. In 1987 the Norwegian Labour government prepared a European Report that established its intentions to adapt Norwegian legislation to Single European Market rules as far as possible. The ensuing negotiations toward the EU-EFTA agreement that would eventually become the

⁵ This is set out on a more comparative basis in N. Sitter, "The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Scandinavia: Is Euro-Scepticism a Government-Opposition Dynamic?", *West European Politics*, 24:4 (2001), 22-39.

⁶ The paraphrasing of Lipset & Rokkan's 'freezing hypothesis' is deliberate, in both cases 'freezing' has largely been a question of party strategy. Their central observation, strictly speaking not a hypothesis, held that "the party systems of the 1960's reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920's." S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: and Introduction", in S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, (London, The Free Press, 1967). On the debate, see P. Mair, *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁷ H. O. Frøland, "Ambiguous Interests: Norway and the West European Market Formations 1959-62", *Arena Working Paper*, 25 (1998).

European Economic Area (EEA) put the question firmly back on the Norwegian agenda. Although the second 'No' vote, in the 1994 referendum, silenced the debate, it has been partially revived with the prospect for eastern enlargement. Because it has wreaked havoc with coalition politics on the centre right, and hangs like Damocles' proverbial sword over the current centre-right coalition which includes a 'suicide clause' that will terminate the coalition in the event that EU membership is put on the agenda, the debate remained cautious for the first two years of the 2001-2005 parliament. However, as the election looms closer, EU enlargement becomes a reality and another Norwegian application for membership seems on the horizon, most parties are reappraising their strategies. Perhaps most famously and radically, Prime Minister Bondevik of the Euro-sceptic Christian People's Party (KrF) has spoken of entering what he calls the 'thinking-box' for more than a year and possibly review his stance on Norway's participation in European integration.

Party Positions on European Integration

Every Norwegian political party has been confronted with, and adopted a position on, the European question. In 1961 the Labour (DNA) government came out more or less in favour of membership, but the party remained divided. The September election had seen the neutralist Socialist People's Party (SF), which broke away from DNA over its policy towards NATO, gain two seats in parliament. In 1975 it would form the basis for the Socialist Left (SV), building on the left-wing anti-EU movements' success in the referendum. Meanwhile the non-socialist bloc initially divided between the parties favourable to European integration, the Conservatives (H) and Liberals (V), and the more negative or divided Christian People's Party (KrF) and agrarian Centre Party (Sp).⁸ Although the Conservatives and Labour have since favoured membership, the Labour party has remained somewhat divided. Yet in June 2003 its leader Stoltenberg came out unambiguously in favour of lodging an application for EU membership during the 2005-2009 parliament, even if this meant giving up the prospect of a Labour-led majority coalition after the election. Under Foreign Minister Pedersen's leadership and in coalition the Euro-sceptic KrF and Liberals, the Conservatives have adopted a lower profile on the EU question, but incoming party leader Solberg is setting out a stronger pro-EU profile. While the Centre Party has proven the party that (together with SV) most strongly and consistently opposed EU membership, the other two centre parties, the Liberals and KrF, went through considerable internal debate before settling down as 'soft' Euro-sceptics. SV and Sp continue to oppose both EU membership and Norway's 'quasi-membership' through the European Economic Area, and SV even opposes NATO membership.⁹ The Liberals, who adopted an ambiguous status-quo oriented platform in the 2001 elections, and the KrF both favour the EEA, although they have traditionally opposed closer participation in European integration. KrF is currently divided on the need to reappraise its position on the question, with the new party leader Høybråten emphasising that the party will remain a 'no' party under his leadership. On the far right, the Progress Party (FrP), which was established in 1973 as an anti-tax protest party named Anders Lange's Party, gradually came out in favour of Norwegian participation in European integration but has returned to a more ambiguous stance

⁸ S. Rokkan, "Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism", in R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

⁹ K. A. Eliassen & N. Sittter, "Ever Closer Co-operation? The Limits of the 'Norwegian Method' of European Integration", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 26:2 (2003), 125-144.

since the 1994 referendum. Carl I. Hagen, the long-standing party leader, has called it a ‘meaningless’ party as far as the European question is concerned. These positions are summarised in table 1.

Table 1 – The Norwegian parties, with percentage of votes in the 1997 and 2001 elections.

Parties and election results 1997 and 2002	1961 - 1972	1972 - 1989	1989-2001	Currently
<i>Left Flank</i>				
Socialist Left – SV (SF before 1975) 1997: 6.0% 2001:12.5%	Hard Euro-sceptic, against NATO	Hard Euro-sceptic, against NATO	Hard Euro-sceptic, against EEA and NATO	Some softening in the party, not the leadership...
<i>Social Democrat</i>				
Labour – DNA 1997: 35.0% 2001: 24.3%	From ambiguous in 1961 to pro-EU	Pro-EU, but very divided, played down the issue	Pro-EU, focuses on the EEA	Leadership prioritises EU application
<i>Centre</i>				
Centre Party – Sp 1997: 7.9% 2001: 5.6%	From moderate in 1960s to hard Euro-sceptic	Hard Euro-sceptic	Hard Euro-sceptic, against EEA	Hard Euro-sceptic, against EEA
Liberals – V 1997: 4.5% 2001: 3.9%	Pro-EU, but ambiguous, eventually splits	Turns soft Euro-sceptic, pro-EU faction leaves	Soft Euro-sceptic, Pro-EEA	Ambiguous
Christian People’s Party – KrF 1997: 13.7% 2001:12.4%	Uncertain during the 1960s, leaning to hard Euro-sceptic	Moderately divided, mainly hard Euro-sceptic	Soft Euro-sceptic, Pro-EEA	Reconsidering, considerable leadership debate
<i>Conservative right</i>				
Conservatives – H 1997: 14.3% 2001: 21.2%	Pro-EU	Pro-EU	Pro-EU, EEA is insufficient	The party prioritises EU application
<i>Right Flank</i>				
Progress Party – FrP 1997: 15.3% 2001:14.6%	N/A	Ambiguous	Pro-EU, but ambiguous after 1994	Deliberately ‘Meaningless’

Table 1 indicates that the Norwegian political parties have not maintained completely frozen position on the European question, but that these have evolved over time. The key question is therefore as much as about the dynamics of change as about stability. A dynamic explanation of party-based Euro-scepticism suggests that party positions as the product of how the issue affects the four central goals of a political party – the survival and continuity of the party, the pursuit of a set of policy goals, maximising votes and the quest for office. Unless a party is at the brink of extinction (e.g. falling below the threshold for representation), the first goal is not usually a major concern. The exception is when a party faces important divisions that may cause a major split,

as the Labour and Liberal parties did in the 1970s. The second goal, pursuit of policy, is often the central focus in the literature on Euro-scepticism.¹⁰ However, given a few significant cases of parties changing or modifying their positions on European integration, the third and fourth goals, the quest for votes and the dynamics of party competition in office and in opposition, are increasingly valuable as explanatory variables.¹¹

Ideology and Policy Positions

In Norway, as elsewhere, the term 'European question' actually denotes a range of issues including both economic questions and less tangible positions on national identity, sovereignty and democracy. It is far more disparate than the divisions that are usually classified as cleavages.¹² Although material bases for opposition to European integration can be identified this has given rise to organised opposition, this builds on a broad range of issues and divisions. Euro-scepticism is perhaps better analysed 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."¹³ It therefore ranges from 'hard' principled Euro-scepticism which combines economic and value-based rejection of supranational integration, to the 'soft' contingent or qualified opposition to participation in European integration based on opposition to specific aspects of its current manifestation (usually specific EU policies).¹⁴ Whether a party adopts hard or soft Euro-scepticism depends partly on the mixture of interest- and value- based opposition, and partly on the extent to which other goals related to the quest for votes or participation in governing coalitions moderate the party's tendency toward Euro-scepticism.

Opposition to membership of the EU is often cast in terms of a combination of interests and values, where interest-driven opposition implies analysis of the economic costs and benefits to specific groups, and value-based opposition is based on identity, concepts of democracy, self-rule and sovereignty and foreign policy.¹⁵

¹⁰ 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); ; S. Hix, "Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics: Cognitive Constraints and Partisan Responses", *European Journal of Political Research*, 35 (1999), 69-109; 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.

¹¹ J. Saglie, "Et klart eller et nyansert nei? Senterpartiet og Svs strategier i EU-striden (1989-94)", *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, 41:2 (2000), 187-214; N. Sitter, "The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Scandinavia: Is Euro-scepticism a Government-Opposition Dynamic?", *West European Politics*, 24:4 (2001), 22-39.

¹² D. W. Rae & M. Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970); S. Bartolini & P. Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹³ P. Taggart, "A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary West European Party Systems", *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 363-388, p.366.

¹⁴ On this concept, see 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 European Research Network Working Paper no. 2* (2001).

¹⁵ P. A. Petersen, A. T. Jensen & O. Listhaug, "The 1994 EU referendum in Norway: Continuity and Change", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 19:3 (1996), 257-281; J. Saglie, "Values, Perceptions and

The economic issues are relatively easy to identify, inasmuch as Norwegian Euro-scepticism draws support from sections of society that face increased uncertainty or loss of subsidies under EU membership, even though Norway has followed the EU in terms of economic policy liberalisation.¹⁶ Agricultural and fisheries policy has proved the main obstacles, because of high subsidies and reluctance to open Norwegian waters to EU fishing boats.¹⁷ Fears that EU membership might undermine Norway's regional (or 'district') policy of economic transfers and positive discrimination added further grounds for opposition. Moreover, opposition to EU membership has been somewhat stronger in the public sector, particularly among voters concerned that internationalisation or globalisation might undermine the Norwegian welfare state.¹⁸ Finally, the SV has long opposed participation in European integration on foreign policy grounds, of course based its particular anti-Western stance rather than economic costs. The SF/SV broke away from Labour over the NATO question, and has since extended this to opposition to the EU as a western capitalist club, dismissing eastern enlargement of the EU as unlikely. The result has been opposition to most actual regional arrangements but not international co-operation as such.¹⁹ The pro-NATO centre parties have distanced themselves from this and association with the radical left, although the KrF has warned that developments in EU foreign, security and defence policy might undermine NATO.²⁰

Value-driven Euro-scepticism is more multi-faceted than economic opposition based on economic interest. A significant part of this is related to the emergence of parliamentary democracy in the Nineteenth Century, in a context where rule by the people meant rule by the *Norwegian* people as opposed to government and administration responsible to the Swedish king under the 1814-1905 Union (which followed the break-up of Denmark-Norway). The change of nomenclature to the European *Union* did not help.²¹ It is telling that the term invoked by Euro-sceptics tends to be *folkestyre* (roughly: people-rule or self-rule) rather than the imported word *suverenitet* (sovereignty), with connotations both of national rule/self-determination and of participatory democracy.²² Nineteenth Century opposition to the (Swedish) 'king's men' in Oslo (then Christiania) also drew on religious and cultural dissent and resistance to the more cosmopolitan conservatives and the established elite-controlled Church.²³ In terms of identity, religion and culture, resistance to Danish cultural

European Integration: The Case of the Norwegian 1994 Referendum", *European Union Politics*, 1:2 (2000), 227-249.

¹⁶ D. H. Claes & B. S. Tranøy (eds.), *Utenfor, annerledes og suveren? Norge under EØS-avtalen*, (Bergen, Fagbokforlaget, 1999); P. C. Müller-Graff & E. Selvig (eds.), *EEA-EU Relations*, (Berlin, Berlin Verlag, 1999).

¹⁷ I. Barnes, "Agriculture, Fisheries and the 1995 Nordic Enlargement", in L. Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*, (London, Routledge, 1996).

¹⁸ Jenssen & Valen (eds.), *Brussel midt imot*; 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*, (Westport, Conn, Praeger, 1993).

¹⁹ D. A. Christensen, "The Left-Wing Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden: Cases of Euro-Phobia?", *West European Politics*, 19:3 (1996), 525-546.

²⁰ K. M. Bondevik [KrF PM 1997-2000, 2001-], *Det tredje alternativet: Kristendemokratisk politikk 'på norsk'*, (Oslo, Folkets Framtid, 1994); KrF "Politisk håndbok 2001" available at www.kfr.no.

²¹ L. K. Köber, "Verre enn union med Sverige", Hovedfagsoppgave, University of Oslo, 2001.

²² On nationalism and the concept of self-determination see E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (London, Hutchinson, 1960).

²³ J. Madeley, "Religion and the Political Order: The Case of Norway", in J. Hadden & S. Shupe (eds.), *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered*, (Paragon House, New York, 1989).

influence (e.g. on written language) and Swedish administration, transmitted through the Oslo elite, thus formed a basis for resistance to Europeanisation as a threat to the country's 'moral-cultural heritage' in the second half of the Twentieth Century.²⁴ This has since been extended to a debate on whether European integration represents a threat to democracy, fuelled by the 'democratic deficit' and 'subsidiarity' debates in the EU.²⁵ The notion that Brussels represented an extension of the threat from the central bureaucracy and mainstream (cosmopolitan) culture in Oslo was succinctly summed up in the 1972 slogan 'it is far to Oslo, but further to Brussels.'²⁶ The No to EU campaign's 1994 slogan centred on three key words – environment, solidarity and the ubiquitous term *folkestyre* – all of which were threatened by the 'union'.²⁷

Figure 1. Norwegian parties' long-term policy perspectives on EU membership

Economic cost-benefit analysis	Non-material goals: values and identity	
	EU not seen as a threat	EU seen as a threat
EU impact seen as/expected to be positive or neutral	Conservatives – H Labour – DNA	Progress Party – FrP Christian People's Party – KrF
EU impact seen as/expected to be negative	Liberals – V	Centre Party – Sp Socialist Left – SV

Electoral Appeal and Coalition Games

Parties' strategies for electoral competition and their efforts to join or break coalition governments make up the second building bloc in the analysis of party-based Euro-scepticism in Norway. First, parties' policy position on European integration can be linked to the parties' positions in the party system, along three dimensions of opposition. These dimensions are defined in terms of the parties' strategies for pursuit of votes and office, but also reflect their historical and organisational origin and policy goal. The three patterns include i) competition between two largest parties, which defines the left-right dimension of the party system; ii) cross-cutting competition based primarily on other issues, the 'third party' or parties in many party systems; and iii) competition on the flanks of the system, by new left or far right parties. In the Norwegian case, the Labour and Conservative parties come closest to the first strategy. Both appeal to largely pro-EU electorates, although a Labour also draws a significant share of Euro-sceptic voters. The three centre parties come closer to the second pattern of opposition, with the Liberals and KrF drawing on mixed

²⁴ J. Madeley, "The Antinomies of Lutheran Politics: The Case of Norway's Christian People's Party", in D. Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, (London, Pinter, 1994); B. F. Nelsen, J. L. Guth & C. R. Fraser, "Does Religion Matter? Christianity and Public Support for the European Union", *European Union Politics*, 2:2 (2001), 191-217.

²⁵ G. H. Kristinsson, "Iceland and Norway: Peripheries in Doubt", in J. Redmond (ed.), *Prospective Europeans*, (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994); M. Sæther, "Norway and the European union: Domestic Debate versus External Reality", in L. Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*, (London, Routledge, 1996).

²⁶ R. Madsen et Al. [Sp's own history project], *Motstraums: Senterpartiets historie 1959-2000*, (Oslo, Det Norske Samlaget, 2001)

²⁷ A. T. Jenssen & H. Valen (eds.), *Brussel midt imot: Folkeavstemningen on EU*, (Oslo, Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1995).

electorates (more Euro-septic in the latter’s case) and the Sp drawing support almost exclusively from voters who reject EU membership. On the flanks, the SV faces a consistently hard Euro-sceptic base, albeit one that faces the prospect of a reassessment arising out of the EU’s eastern enlargement, whereas the FrP draws on a mixed electorate. Second, however, party positions may be modified by coalition politics. The three centre-right parties, the Conservatives, Christian People’s Party and the Liberals all face incentives to modify their respective stances if they are to maintain a coalition, hence the current coalition agreement not to discuss EU membership. Although the Progress Party plays the role of external supporter rather than coalition member, its aspirations to join an conservative-led coalition likewise provides incentives for it not to turn Euro-sceptic, but these aspirations are compatible with its ambiguous position. By contrast, the Centre Party has prioritised policy over coalitions, precipitating the collapse of coalition governments in 1971 and 1990. So far the lack of coalitions between Labour and her left-wing competition have kept both parties relatively immune from pressure to moderate their respective pro- and anti-EU stances, though current debates on the possibility of future co-operation may set the scene for changes here.

Figure 2: Norwegian parties’ strategic and tactical incentives Euro-scepticism

Coalition government	Mainly pro-EU electorate	Vote-seeking Neutral/divided electorate	Mainly anti-EU electorate
Coalition politics/aspirations exerts moderating effect	Conservatives – H	Liberals – V	Christian People’s Party – KrF
Coalition politics/aspirations exerts little or no moderating effect	Labour – DNA	Progress Party – FrP	Centre Party – Sp Socialist Left – SV

The next section addresses the three broad strategies for competition, or patterns of opposition, setting out the bases for the location of the parties in Figures 1 and 2.

Three Patterns of Competition, Strategies of Opposition and Euro-Scepticism

The Catch-All Parties – Labour and the Conservatives

Although all Norwegian parties have become more ‘professionalised’ only two warrant classification a catch-all parties in Kirchheimer’s sense – Labour (DNA) and the Conservatives (H, for *Høyre*, literally ‘the Right’).²⁸ Dating back to the introduction of parliamentary rule in the 1880s, the parties come close to their West European ideal types of a conservative party on the right that adopts a free market

²⁸ L. Svåsand, “Change and Adaptation in Norwegian Party Organization” in R. S. Katz & P. Mair (eds.), *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*, (London, Sage, 1994); 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).

position and a social democrat left that eventually plays down ideology in the pursuit of votes. In a country where territorial cleavages have been salient, both parties have been associated with the Oslo elite. Their competition has defined the left-right spectrum in Norwegian politics, reflecting strategies that pit each against the other as the main opponent and entails focus on socio-economic issues. In line with their economic and foreign policy, both have come out in favour of close Norwegian participation in European integration, including full EU membership. However, Labour has been more divided on the issue, as its left wing has harboured strong anti-EU dissent from the party leadership's line.²⁹

Neither party faces strong incentives to play up the European issue. There is little or no indication that emphasising the quest for membership attracts voters in national elections. On the contrary, both parties have lost out to Euro-sceptics opponents. Moreover, Labour has long been divided on the question of EU membership. Its severe divisions in the early 1970s have since prompted more cautious approaches, e.g. focussing on the EEA arrangements in the 1980s until the membership question became all but inevitable in the early 1990s. Although they have not been hit severely by internal dissent, the Conservatives' preference for coalitions with the centre-parties has forced the party to play down or freeze the question of EU membership when in coalition government. On the other hand, the two parties perceive each other as the main opposition, and their own role when the other is in office therefore entails a degree opposition to the other's initiatives. Hence Labour's criticism of the centre-right government's timid position on integration in the second half of the 1960s and the Conservatives' similar criticism of Labour during the EEA negotiations in the early 1990s. The parties have thus defied the more usual West European pattern of adopting slightly more Euro-sceptic positions when in opposition and in government, largely because of their need for support from Euro-sceptic parties when in office, whether in coalitions or as minority governments. It was therefore no surprise when in the summer of 2003 Labour, which is in opposition, came out in favour a new EU membership application before the governing Conservatives did.

The Interest Parties – The Christian Peoples Party, the Liberals and Centre Party

The term 'interest party' is invoked here to denote parties that by and large have eschewed catch-all strategies in favour of electoral appeal that focuses on a more strictly delineated section of the electorate. This is not to say that the parties have not modernised in terms of changing organisational structure, finance or the respective roles of leadership, mass membership and party professionals. However, they have chosen to focus on a limited range of specific issues, often designed to appeal to a section of the electorate. In Norway this strategy has been facilitated by the origins of the centre parties, which can best be described as 'territorial opposition', a combination of economic and cultural interests associated with primary industry and the peripheries, combined with opposition to administrative centralisation.³⁰ Three parties have roots in the Nineteenth Century (pre-socialist) left, or territorial

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ S. Rokkan & D. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries*, (London, Sage, 1983).

opposition. The Liberals (V for *Venstre*, literally ‘the Left’) represent direct continuity in name and organisation. The agrarian Centre Party (Sp) and the Christian People’s Party (KrF) were both formed during the inter-war period, when representatives of clearly delineated constituencies left the Liberals. Taking advantage of the 1919 electoral reform to a list proportional system, the National Union of Farmers formed the Farmer’s Party to protect farmer’s economic interests. Despite the 1959 name change to Centre Party (Sp), reflecting cautious efforts to expand its target electorate, the party has remained more focussed on its core voters and interests than other Nordic agrarian parties.³¹ The KrF was formed as a regional party in a conflict over nominations for the Liberal list in Hordaland in the south-west 1933, building its base in the lay pietist Lutheran dissident movement that had been part of the left. It went nation-wide in 1945. Although it has deliberately expanded its appeal beyond the movement’s traditional focus on religion and moral questions including alcohol prohibition, its religious roots retain a strong influence on party policy.³² Lacking a similarly distinct basis, save regional elites in the south and south-west, the rump Liberal party has transformed itself into the closest thing Norway has to an environment party.³³ Whereas the two newer parties are more homogeneous and avoided major divisions over the European issue, the Liberals split over this at the party congress after the 1972 referendum, when the pro-EEC party leader left to found the New Peoples Party (DNF, but since 1980 the Liberal Peoples Party, DLF). For sixteen years, until reunification in 1988, it ran against the Liberals, producing some of the most openly pro-EU party manifestos in Norway, and returning one MP in the 1973 election.

Operating on this second dimension of opposition, with interest-oriented rather than catch-all strategies, has insulated the three parties against incentives to move towards pro-EU platforms. Although moves towards catch-all like electoral strategies inevitably involve revisiting the parties’ positions on Europe, such moves have so far been limited. On the other hand, both Sp and KrF appeal to Euro-sceptic electorates, and both have been able to attract Euro-sceptic Labour and Conservative voters. Given the economic and cultural questions discussed above, the parties face both policy and electoral motives for Euro-scepticism. In the Centre Party’s case this has yielded a hard principled Euro-scepticism which combines economic and value-based rejection of supranational integration, as opposed to the soft contingent or qualified opposition found in KrF and V (both of which have been more internally divided). Although divisions among the non-socialist parties on this question has inhibited and broken up coalitions, the effect of coalition politics on the centre parties’ Euro-scepticism has been limited. Given that the EU membership questions are settled by referendum, the main effect has been that non-socialist coalitions put the question on ice, or, failing that, break up. Of the three parties, KrF has faced the strongest pressure to moderate its Euro-scepticism, partly because of its mid-1990s move

³¹ G. H. Kristinsson, *Farmers’ Parties: A Study in Electoral Adaptation*, (Reykjavik, Social Science Research Institute, 1991); D. A. Christensen, “The Norwegian Agrarian-Centre Party: Class, Rural or Catchall Party?”, in D. Arter (ed.), *From Farmyard to City Square? The Electoral Adaptation of the Nordic Agrarian Parties*, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001).

³² J. Madely, “The Antinomies of Lutheran Politics: The Case of Norway’s Christian People’s Party”, in D. Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, (London, Pinter, 1994).

³³ O. Knutsen, “The Materialist/Post-Materialist Value Dimension as a Party Cleavage in the Nordic Countries”, *West European Politics*, 13:2 (1990), 258-273.

toward a more catch-all like strategy (it began to use the English translation ‘Christian Democratic Party of Norway’ parallel to ‘Christian People’s Party’).

The Flanking Parties – The Socialist Left and the Progress Party

The alternative non-catch-all strategy, the third pattern of opposition, is found on the flanks of the party system in the younger Socialist Left party (SV) and Progress Party (FrP). Again the difference from other parties lies more in party strategy than organisation, as both parties have opted for opposition on the flanks of the system rather than catch-all strategies or territorial interest-based opposition. Alone among the major parties, the two have never been in government. The SV’s roots in Labour’s neutralist, anti-NATO and anti-EEC left wing makes modification of its hard Euro-sceptic stance difficult both from a policy standpoint and in terms of its electoral appeal. Its opposition to European integration provided the main unifying platform in the early 1970s. The party’s somewhat softer stance on European integration in the early 1990s proved costly in the 1993 election, when it lost out to the Centre Party.³⁴ More recent attempts by the leadership to reopen a debate on Europe have been met with hostility by the party grassroots. However, the possibility of a coalition with Labour has generated some pressure for modification of the party programme. The party passed Labour in the opinion polls for the first time in March 2002, but like the FrP its fortunes according to polls fluctuate considerably.

On the far right, the free-market low-tax orientation of the Progress Party (FrP) has provided a modifying factor for a party that might otherwise be expected to oppose European integration given its hard-line stance on immigration. The party’s founders included both opponents and advocates of EEC membership, and the party has therefore lacked the unity on international affairs that has characterised SV. Although the party came out in favour of EU membership in the 1994 referendum, it has since returned to a more ambiguous stance. At the same time, the party has developed into a serious challenger to the Conservatives on the right flank, and the two parties are therefore adapting to each other’s platforms.³⁵ As it faces few incentives for or against Euro-scepticism at the electoral level, where it has recently made deep inroads into the Conservatives’ electoral base, the party’s main drivers on the European question are policy and coalition politics. Its recent more protectionist and interventionist stance has driven the party away from its earlier EU-enthusiasm. However, its quest for participation in a non-socialist coalition continues to generate incentives not to antagonise the Conservatives over an issue in which there appears to be few votes to be gained. Like the SV the party has gained considerable strength at the expense of its main competitor in the 1990s, and it occasionally and recurrently outranks the Conservatives in opinion polls. Both flanking parties’ leaderships are therefore flirting with and exploring more conventional catch-all strategies that move them closer to mainstream government-opposition competition.

³⁴ B. Ardal, “The 1994 [sic] Storting Election: Volatile Voters Opposing the European Union”, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 17:2 (1994), 171-180.

³⁵ 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.

Persistence and Change in Norwegian Euro-Scepticism

Since the question first emerged on the agenda in 1961, the debate on EU membership and has gone through three broad phases. The period up to the 1972 referendum entailed parties developing positions on a new issue on which many of them did not have clear preferences and which was in any case poorly defined. The exact meaning of membership of or association with the EU remained ambiguous until the referendum campaigns, and this was partly the result of deliberate political strategy. This first phase culminated in the radical polarisation that characterised the referendum campaign, which split the Liberals, broke up the non-socialist coalition and did considerable damage to Labour Party unity. The subsequent truce over the EU issue remained in force until the later 1980s, when the new political realities including the reinvigoration of European integration with the '1992' initiative and the collapse of communism place the issue firmly on the agenda again. The aftermath of the 1994 referendum produced a much shorter 'freezing' of the European question, and although the 1997 and 2001 elections saw limited focus on the EU question a new debate is emerging. Table 2, below, summarises the persistence and change in the parties' programmatic positions on European integration. Although these positions are sometimes the product of efforts to paper over differences within the party over European integration, and sometimes simply avoid any reference to this issue, they provide some indication of the evolution of the parties' formal positions. 'Neg' and 'Anti' denote Euro-sceptic stances that entail respectively a negative stance toward European integration or outright rejection of EU membership. 'SQ' indicates explicit defence of the status quo, and 'none' a lack of references to European integration. Both can mask Euro-sceptic as well as pro-EU stances. 'Fav' and 'Pro' indicate respectively favourable stances toward and explicit advocacy of Norwegian EU membership or application for this. As the table indicates, the decade before the 1972 referendum saw gradual polarisation on European integration, while the next decade and a half yielded far more moderate programmes. The renewed and stronger polarisation in the run-up to the 1994 referendum has not been followed by the same kind of programmatic caution, except for the FrP.

Table 2 – Party programmatic positions on European Integration, as per election programmes by year of election.

	1961	1965	1969	1973	1977	1981	1985	1989	1993	1997	2001
SV	Neg	Neg	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti	none	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti
DNA	Fav	Fav	Pro	SQ	SQ	SQ	Fav	Fav	Pro	Fav	Pro
Sp	Neg	Fav	None	Anti	SQ	SQ	SQ	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti
V	Fav	Fav	SQ	SQ	None	SQ	Neg	Anti	Anti	Anti	SQ
KrF	SQ	SQ	SQ	SQ	None	None	SQ	SQ	Anti	Anti	Anti
H	Fav	Fav	Pro	Pro	Fav	Fav	Fav	Pro	Pro	Pro	Pro
FrP	--	--	--	None	Fav	None	none	Pro	Pro	SQ	SQ

Anti – indicates explicit opposition to EU membership (in the case of Sp and SV after 1993 also advocacy of withdrawal from the EEA)

Neg – indicates implicit negative attitude to participation in European integration

SQ – indicates explicit defence of the status quo

none – indicates no reference to European integration, explicit or implicit

Fav – indicates explicit favourable attitude to participation in European integration

Pro – indicates explicit support for (application for) membership of the EU

Source: party programmes 1961-2001

1961 – 1972: Deliberation, Prevarication and Polarisation

When the European question was raised seriously for the first time with the British application for EU membership in July 1961, the Norwegian political parties were confronted with the challenge of how to integrate a new issue into their political profiles. The election set for September left little time for to elaborate positions on European integration. Although Labour returned to power, it was now a minority government at the mercy of the socialist left SF's two MPs. The new government prevaricated, and De Gaulle's veto was welcomed as relief by many in the party.³⁶ The veto also ended the truce with the pro-EU conservatives, the first evidence of the indirect effect of the European question on coalition politics. A short-lived minority four-party centre-right coalition relieved DNA government for a month in 1963, and won the election two years later. However, the four were far from united on the European question, a fact Labour exploited by criticising the governments timid approach to the EU question.³⁷ Even the Conservatives, who had established their pro-EU stance early, would not replace 'integration' with explicit advocacy of membership until in the party programme until 1969. Though divided between the conservative southern and radical urban Oslo wings, the Liberals eventually came out in favour of membership in 1962 after a 43-13 vote in the party.³⁸ The KrF and Centre parties were more ambiguous, but despite the latter's opposition to membership it accepted association (partly to distance itself from the socialist left and communists).³⁹ 1965-69 was first and only time these parties would give up their Euro-scepticism in order to maintain a coalition. De Gaulle's second veto probably saved the government.⁴⁰

The four-party coalition's election victory was undermined by the radicalisation of the three centre parties, and particularly their youth wings, in the late 1960s over e.g. the Vietnam war and the 1968 protests in Europe. Although the three centre parties' barely addressed European integration in their 1969 manifestos, all decided to advice their voters to reject EU membership in the September 1972 referendum. When the EU question brought down the Per Borten (Sp) government in early 1971, the overwhelmingly hard Euro-sceptic Sp was free to openly reject membership. The Liberals' divisions became so severe that the party split after the referendum.⁴¹ KrF leader Lars Korvald stuck to a wait-and-see formula until the party conference adopted a 'No' stance in April 1972, but had declared himself privately for the 'Nos' the year before.⁴² Although the KrF leadership was evenly divided, its members and voters opposed EU membership by a four-to-one margin and some of its MPs were defying the party line in votes on Europe.⁴³ On the left, DNA's leadership was firmly committed to EU membership, as advocated in its 1969 manifesto, although the party

³⁶ O. Nordli [DNA PM 1976-81], *Min Vei: Minner og Meninger*, (Oslo, Tiden, 1985).

³⁷ J. Lyng [H PM 1963], *Mellom øst og vest: Erindringer 1965-1968*, (Oslo Cappelen, 1976).

³⁸ K. Jensvold, *Venstre og EEC-spørsmålet 1961-63*, Hovedoppgave, University of Oslo, 1979.

³⁹ R. W. Kunudsen [Sp], "Senterpartiet og den nye Europa-debatten", in B. B. Knudsen (ed.), *Den Nye Europa-debatten*, (Oslo, Cappelen, 1989).

⁴⁰ As per the then foreign minister, J. Lyng [H PM 1963], *Mellom øst og vest*.

⁴¹ E. Holst-Jæger, *Venstre 1963-72: Splittelse og EF-strid*, Hovedoppgave, University of Oslo.

⁴² E. Rimhaug [KrF journalist], *Midtbanespilleren: Kjell Magne Bondevik og Kristelig Folkeparti*, (Oslo, Luther Forlag, 1997).

⁴³ O. J. Sæther [KrF], "Kristelig Folkeparti og den nye Europa-debatten", in B. B. Knudsen (ed.), *Den Nye Europa-debatten*, (Oslo, Cappelen, 1989).

was increasingly and bitterly divided. Trygve Bratteli (DNA), Borten's successor as Prime Minister, ruled out co-operation with Euro-sceptics and promised to resign in the event of a referendum defeat. In October 1972 he duly did. Meanwhile, Euro-scepticism provided the uniting cause for the creation of a Socialist Electoral Federation for the 1973 election to defend the referendum victory. It brought together the SF, Labour dissenters, communists and independent socialists in what would become the Socialist Left (SV) in 1975.⁴⁴

1972 – 1989: All Quiet on the European Front

The 1972 referendum was followed by a decade-and-a-half-long truce on the European question, during which no party manifesto (except the Liberal breakaway DLF) explicitly called for Norway to join the EU. Only in 1989 did strong pro- and anti-EU positions return. The immediate consequence of the referendum was Bratteli's resignation and the establishment of Norway's first Euro-sceptic government, a minority coalition of KrF, V and Sp led by Lars Korvald (KrF), charged with negotiating a bilateral agreement with the EU. Although this government did not survive the 1973 election, after which DNA returned to power for two full terms, it demonstrated how European integration would shape non-socialist coalition games for the next three decades. When the EU issue is salient, the 'bourgeois' alternative is at best fragile and at worst a non-starter. To be sure, bourgeois cooperation worked reasonably well under Kåre Willoch's (H) 1981-83 minority government and the subsequent H-KrF-Sp coalition, until the FrP brought down the minority coalition in 1986. However, the return of a H-KrF-Sp government under Jan P. Syse (H) after the 1989 election, when negotiations toward the European Economic Area were well underway, would be short-lived. With Sp and H at odds over how far to integrate the EFTA states into the EU's Single Market, the coalition's collapse was all but inevitable. It came in November 1990, after which Sp would lend support to a minority DNA government. On the far right, the Progress party maintained silence on the European question until the internal party debate got going in 1987. By 1988 the party had concluded that membership was attractive, the benefits of free trade, lower taxes, market access and cheap imports outweighed the dangers of limited freedom of action and EU-driven protectionism.⁴⁵

Labour likewise did little by way of advocating EU membership during this period, its pro-EU leadership preferring to focus on ever closer co-operation with the EU (reflected in its programmes throughout the period). The Bratteli, Nordli and Brundtland governments (1973-81) hardly addressed the question, and then only in economic terms.⁴⁶ However, Gro Harlem Brundtland's 1986-89 government took a far more active role, driving forward the 'Luxembourg process' (dating back to 1984) of closer EU-EFTA association that would eventually produce the EEA. For the two parties that were most divided over European Integration and for whom policy incentives were mixed, DNA and KrF, the EEA provided an attractive compromise. Unsurprisingly, KrF-leader Kjell Magne Bondevik proved Brundtland's closest ally,

⁴⁴T. Erikstad [SV], "Sosialistisk Venstreparti og den nye Europa-debatten", in B. B. Knudsen (ed.), *Den Nye Europa-debatten*, (Oslo, Cappelen, 1989).

⁴⁵J. Simonsen [FrP], "Fremskrittspartiet og den nye Europa-debatten", in B. B. Knudsen (ed.), *Den Nye Europa-debatten*, (Oslo, Cappelen, 1989).

⁴⁶B. Bull [DNA], "Arbeiderpartiet og den nye Europa-debatten", in B. B. Knudsen (ed.), *Den Nye Europa-debatten*, (Oslo, Cappelen, 1989).

whereas the other parties criticised the EEA alternative as too limited (H) or going too far (SV, Sp).⁴⁷ On Labour's left flank, SV maintained opposition to any form of closer integration with the EU, although the anti-imperialist and -capitalist language of the 1970s programmes was toned down.

1989 – 2001: Persistence and Moderate Change

The party programmes of 1989 indicated how party positions on the European question would develop over the next five years. Although the second referendum re-opened for debate in each party, most swiftly settled down along the battle-lines of 1972. In 1993 election and the 1994 referendum DNA, H and FrP explicitly favoured EU membership, while the three centre parties and SV expressly rejected it. Sp and SV also opposed the EEA agreement, with Sp adopting the most uncompromising stance.⁴⁸ With about half the electorate opposing EU membership and the EU topping opinion polls as the single most important matter, the four parties faced considerable incentives for Euro-sceptic appeal. Although the Conservatives and Labour likewise faced incentives to play down their pro-EU stance, this had limited effects.⁴⁹ However, the DNA faced the challenge of considerable internal dissent. Saglie shows that the party had learned considerably from its problems in 1972, as the leadership arranged a 'contract of disagreement' with its internal 'semi-legitimate fraction' Social Democrats against the EC (SME).⁵⁰ It contained three strands of internal opposition: the traditional trade union left, the post-materialist new left and the rural wings of the party.⁵¹ Meanwhile, on the far right, the FrP developed its pro-EU position into a stance summed up in the 1993 slogan 'Yes to the EC, not to Union', foreshadowing its return to ambiguity after the referendum and capturing its misgivings about Economic and Monetary Union and the EU's social dimension.

Although the 1994 referendum result reflected the results of 1972, the consequences for the Norwegian party system were far less severe.⁵² In contrast to the post-1972 era, the EU question did not recede into obscurity after the 1994 referendum. The DNA remained in power, with Thorbjørn Jagland taking over from Brundtland before the 1997 election, which corrected some of the distortions of the 'EU-election' of 1993.⁵³ To be sure, in 1997 Norway got its second Euro-sceptic government, a KrF-V-Sp coalition led by Bondevik and barely controlling a quarter of parliament's seats. But it owed less to the European question than to Jagland's threat to resign if DNA polled less than in 1993 (it dropped from 36.9% to 35.0%). Bondevik's government fell over a partly EU-related question connected to gas power plants in March 2000,

⁴⁷ G. H. Brundtland [DNA PM 1981, 1986-89 and 1990-1996], *Dramatiske år*, (Oslo, Gyldendak, 1998).

⁴⁸ J. Saglie, "Et klart eller et nyansert nei? Senterpartiet og SVs strategier i EU-striden (1989-94)", *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, 41:2 (2000), 187-214.

⁴⁹ J. Saglie, "A Struggle for the Agenda? Norwegian Parties and the European Issue 1989-1995", *Party Politics*, 4:3 (1998), 347-366.

⁵⁰ J. Saglie, "Between Opinion Leadership and 'Contract of Disagreement': The Norwegian Labour Party and the European issue (1988-1994)", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 23:2 (2000), 93-113.

⁵¹ R. Geyer & D. Swank, "Rejecting the European Union: Norwegian Social Democratic Opposition to the EU in the 1990s", *Party Politics*, 3:4 (1997), 459-562.

⁵² P. A. Pettersen, A. T. Jenssen & O. Listhaug, "The 1994 Referendum in Norway: Continuity and Change", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 19:3 (1996), 257-281.

⁵³ J. Madeley, "The Politics of Embarrassment: Norway's 1997 Election", *West European Politics*, 21:2 (1998), 187-194.

giving way to a DNA minority government led by Jens Stoltenberg. The main surprise was not the government's collapse, but how long it remained in place given that the pro-EU majority in parliament. European integration retained its place in the party programmes. Apart from DNA's softening of its pro-EU language in 1997, only FrP and V have modified their stances significantly. While the FrP has taken up an explicitly ambiguous position, V's 2001 programme opened for but does not welcome a new EU debate. KrF's 2001 manifesto Euro-scepticism is somewhat softer than four years earlier, while both SV and Sp retain their calls for leaving the EEA. The Conservatives maintained explicit advocacy of membership in 1997 and 2001. Even the DNA 2001 manifesto opened for membership during the 2001-05 parliament, presenting argument in favour and barely falling short of calling for immediate EU membership.

At the same time the implications of Norway's 'quasi-membership' of the EU through the European Economic Area have become clearer, and begun to affect the membership debate. Inasmuch as the agreement requires Norway to adopt new relevant EU legislation, and Norway has secured separate participation in the Schengen agreement, Norwegian public policy is increasingly made in the shadow of the EU.⁵⁴ Although legal sovereignty (the legal right to rule) is retained, effective sovereignty (exercise of power) is proving to be more limited than for EU members. Although the EEA agreement is intergovernmental in form, it has proven largely supranational in effect, with the EFTA Surveillance Authority playing a similar supervisory role for Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland as the Commission plays for the EU member states. "Outside the EU, Norway will become a vassal-state". Thus read perhaps the most controversial of the current head of the parliament's foreign affairs committee Jagland's 'ten theses on Norway and the EU'.⁵⁵ A recent report, commissioned by the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry, invoked the metaphor of escalators to suggest that under the EEA system Norway is continually adapting to and integrating more closely with the EU: even 'standing still' entails moving forward; the alternatives are catching up (membership) or walking backward down the moving escalator.⁵⁶ Yet, as External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten made clear in 2001, at the same time the EU's patience with, or at least spare capacity to deal with, tailor-made arrangements is decreasing as the focus shifts to managing deepening and widening of the Union.⁵⁷ Or, as per the political head of the Norwegian Foreign office: the Commission has appeared 'less flexible and more legalistic' recently.⁵⁸ This sums up the current Norwegian dilemma: quasi-membership of the EU entails ever-closer cooperation, and the advantages of the supposed discretion that such arrangements entail shrinks with the deepening and widening of the EU.

⁵⁴ K. A. Eliassen & n. Sitter, *The Quiet European: Norway's Quasi-Membership of the European Union*, in P. Magnette (ed.), *La Grande Europe*, (Institut d'études européennes, Université de Bruxelles, 2004).

⁵⁵ T. Jagland [DNA PM 1996-97], *Ti teser om EU og Norge*, (Oslo, Aschehoug, 2003).

⁵⁶ M.Emerson, M. Vahl & S. Woolcock, *Navigating by the Stars: Norway, the European Economic Area and the European Union*, (Brussels, the Centre for European Policy Studies, 2002).

⁵⁷ C. Patten, *Norway and Europe – the Limits of Sovereignty*, Speech /01/3 - Oslo, 10 January, 2001.

⁵⁸ K. traavik, "EØS-avtalen under press: hva gjør Norge?", speech, NHOs Brusselkonferanse 01/03/2002.

Towards 2005: The European Question and Domestic Coalition Games

The H-KrF-V minority government that took office in 2001 election remains as divided over European integration as its bourgeois predecessors. The very survival of the government is contingent on the question of EU membership not being raised. The incoming leader of the Conservative party, Erna Solberg, is increasingly prioritising an EU application over future coalition politics, and has indicated that a double referendum (one on whether to negotiate a new deal with the EU, followed by one on whether to accept the result) might be the solution to the conundrum of how ministers from 'no' parties could sit in a coalition government that negotiates EU membership (*Aftenposten* 21 March 2004). In many ways KrF's strategy is the key to whether European integration will break a future centre-right coalition. The party's recent efforts to challenge the Conservatives as the leading party on the centre right and widen its electoral base has placed it in a dilemma between its more traditional interest-based territorial opposition and a more catch-all oriented strategy. This has been expressed in a series of increasingly EU-friendly speeches and statements by Prime Minister Bondevik, who has announced that he will reassess his position on European integration and has praised what he sees as flexible integration in Europe. At the same time, the party's new leader Dagfinn Høybråten and its parliamentary leader Jon Lilletun continue to voice opposition to EU membership, and the latter has engaged in talks with the other Euro-sceptic parties with a view to forming an anti-EU network (*Aftenposten* 8 March 2004). Recent party conferences may have avoided the EU debate, but a broad party debate on the issue will take place before the 2005 election. Meanwhile, the FrP is challenging both parties from the right, and has come up with the 'meaningless on the EU question' formula for avoiding a question that could upset potential coalition partners as well as antagonise voters of either view, and its leader has even hinted that he could vote 'no' in a referendum (*Aftenposten* 11 March 2004). In short, on the centre-right, the future of the coalition and the EU question are inextricably linked for some time to come.

Historically coalition politics has not had the same impact on the centre-left, where policy and party unity have driven changes and continuity in Euro-scepticism. This, however, has begun to change over the last two years. DNA's position has long been pro-EU on policy grounds, but as long as open co-operation with the Conservatives is ruled out this means relying on Euro-sceptic parties when in government. Yet the current party leader Jen Stoltenberg has made clear that he is not prepared to abandon the quest of a new application soon after the 2005 election in order to secure a majority coalition with the Euro-sceptic SV and SP (*Aftenposten* 26 June 2003, 11 February 2004). Along with industrial and environmental policy, foreign policy in general and specifically the European issue has emerged as the key battle ground between the two parties. The Labour party conference in April is expected to clarify the issue, but an internal party commission on the European question will work on the issue until the 2005 spring conference (it is led by former 'no'-man Bjarne Hansen). On the far left, SV's rise, occasionally surpassing DNA in the polls, presents a major challenge inasmuch as the prospect of co-operation, if not a future coalition, with SV raises the possibility that the EU issue may come to shape coalition politics on the left as it has done the right. The party now faces the classic dilemma of whether to abandon its protest-origin for a more catch-all like appeal, or retain its focus on a smaller group of core (very Euro-sceptic) voters. However, despite some ambiguous statements and an increasing share of pro-EU party activists and voters, party leader

Kristin Halvorsen remains committed to opposition to EU, EEA and NATO membership. Only Sp therefore faces no incentives to alter its Euro-sceptic strategy. A key difference between the two is that whereas SV will follow a (formally only advisory) referendum result in the formal vote in Parliament, SP-leader Åslaug Haga retains for herself the right to vote no in the event of a narrow referendum 'yes' (*Aftenposten* 20 June 2003). In short, while the 1972 result yielded a long period of little development in the European question, the 1994 'No' in the context of EEA membership has not allowed the Norwegian parties the luxury of burying the European question.

Conclusion – Beyond the Politics of Opposition?

As the 2005 election approaches, both the current centre-right coalition and the potential centre-left coalition thus remain hostages to the EU question. Yet the image of 'frozen' party positions on European integration is at least somewhat misleading. Somewhat paradoxically, the shake-up of the party system that the Europe-dominated 1993 election provided has also begun to undermine the dimensions of opposition that secured a prominent place for Euro-scepticism in the party system in the first place. Although the policy-driven stances on European integration reflect the party policy positions of 1972, electoral and coalition games have moderated some party positions. In the run-up to the 2005 election, coalition strategies are receiving more attention than ever, and the Centre Party now remains the only unambiguously hard Euro-sceptic party. Despite the radical changes in the EU itself the Christian People's Party and the Liberals retain their old policy positions, yet their current participation in the governing coalition has contributed to the softening of their stances. The effect on SV has been much less prominent, but internal debates about strategy have emerged and opposition to European integration is increasingly soft and contingent rather than absolute and taken for granted without reference to strategy. Although Norwegian party politics still features the hardest Euro-sceptics in Western Europe, the key to the future debate lies with the soft Euro-sceptics.

Until 2001 party-based Euro-scepticism in Scandinavia was very much a matter of government and opposition. Stable patterns and strategies of party competition ensured that party-based Euro-scepticism evolved slowly. Interest-based and flanking opposition has been associated with opposition or scepticism to European integration, and only the mainstream centre-right and left parties have favoured EU membership unambiguously. However, during the 1990s governments were formed and broken in the shadow of the EU debate, even if the membership question remained on temporarily on ice. As the question is being raised again, perhaps inevitably in the light of the EU's enlargement, the dynamics of government – opposition competition are changing. The EU question is not so much moving beyond government vs opposition, but rather becoming inextricably linked to the question of coalition formation in the context the 2005 election. At the moment, all the major players (except the FrP) prioritise their positions on EU membership over coalition games. The key questions are how far the coalition politics and EU questions will be reconciled on both sides of the left – right divide over the next year, how far the two main soft Euro-sceptic parties and potential junior coalition partner will soften their opposition to membership, and what policy or office concessions they may be able to extract in return.