



**The Centre for European
and Asian Studies**

**REPORT
2/2005
ISSN 1500-2683**

**The Politics of Opposition and European
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Perspective on Norwegian Party-Based
Eurocepticism**

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A publication from:

**The Centre for European and Asian Studies at
Norwegian School of Management**
Nydalsveien 37
0442, Oslo

Report prepared for:

Arena Seminar
University of Oslo
25 October 2005

Arena Seminar, University of Oslo, 25 October 2005

The Politics of Opposition and European Integration: A Comparative Politics Perspective on Norwegian Party-Based Euroscepticism

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The Norwegian political parties' positions on the 'European Question' faithfully reflect the stances they elaborated in the first decade after membership of the EEC was first raised in 1961. No other European country has seen quite such strong and persistent party-based Euroscepticism, and few can match the range of parties that oppose closer participation in European integration. Part of the explanation lies in voter preferences, and the reinforcing patterns of old centre-periphery cleavages and the European question, but only a part of it. Political parties, or rather their leaders, balance four main objectives: to win votes, enter office, to shape policy outcomes, and not least to manage the party organisation. Together these four factors shape party strategy. The present paper suggests that Euroscepticism is best understood as a matter of party strategy; that parties make strategic choices about their stances on European integration. Drawing on the comparative party politics literature, three ideal-type strategies for competition are identified, each of which has implications for how parties deal with the European question. Opposition to European integration is therefore interpreted not as a new cleavage, let alone a frozen one, but a much more contingent phenomenon: the 'politics of opposition'.

Comparative Politics and Party-Based Euroscepticism: The Not-So Amazing Case of Norway

The most remarkable features of party-based opposition to European integration in Norway are its prevalence across the party system and its persistence.¹ While most West European party systems feature only one or two parliamentary parties that oppose EU membership, and these are usually found at the flanks of the system, Norway has long featured four such parties, in the centre and on the far left. Moreover, whereas many Eurosceptic parties in Western Europe have abandoned or played down their opposition to European integration, the Norwegian political parties' positions on the 'European Question' reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the patterns established in the 1960. In fact this paraphrasing of Lipset & Rokkan's 'freezing hypothesis' barely even warrants the 'significant exceptions' qualifier.² By

¹ Much country-specific and comparative research has been published by the *European Parties, Elections and Referendums Network* (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/1-4-2.html>) and its predecessor, the *Opposing Europe Research Network*, see particularly P. Taggart & A. Szczerbiak (eds), *The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford University Press, two volumes, in press. The present paper draws work published earlier as "The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Scandinavia: Is Euro-scepticism a Government-Opposition Dynamic?", *West European Politics*, 24:4 (2001), 22-39; "Euro-scepticism as Party Strategy", *Austrian Journal of Political Science*, 23:3 (2003), 239-352 and the chapter on Norway in the OUP volume.

² Lipset & Rokkan's observation, which is not strictly speaking a hypothesis, was 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

the time the first referendum on EEC membership was held in 1972, the battle-lines were drawn. The parties have more or less stuck to their trenches ever since. The most dramatic change in four decades has been the Progress Party's coming out in favour of EU membership in the late 1980s, before returning to neutrality after the 1994 referendum. The salience of the European question may have fluctuated, but the old patterns of party-based Euroscepticism persist.

The European question first became pressing in Norway when the UK decided to seek membership of the EEC in the summer of 1961, a few months before the Norwegian election. In contrast to the Danish and Irish governments, which quickly followed London's lead, the Norwegian government hesitated.³ The Labour government eventually came out in favour of membership, but the party was less than united. Its new (anti-NATO) rival on the far left, the Socialist People's Party, was hardly about to endorse European integration. On the centre-right, the Conservatives and Liberals came out in favour, but the Christian People's Party and Centre Party were divided, if not outright negative. In any case, De Gaulle's repeated veto on enlargement defused the question; this may have been a necessary condition for the centre-right to form a four-party coalition government in 1965.⁴ Radicalisation of the three centre parties (in particular their youth wings) helped undermine the coalition's durability when it won re-election in 1969. The three parties elaborated increasingly Eurosceptic platforms, while the Conservatives united in pursuit of EEC membership. When the coalition fell in 1971, it was effectively over the European question (much the same would happen in 1990, in the run-up to the second referendum). Come the 1972 referendum campaign the battle lines were drawn: the centre and the far left came out against EEC membership (though the Liberals split, nearly fatally); the two main parties advocated membership, albeit with deep divisions in the Labour camp.

Table 1. Party positions on European Integration, as per programmes by election year.

	1961	1965	1969	1973	1977	1981	1985	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005
Soc	Neg	Neg	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti	none	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti
Lab	Fav	Fav	Pro	SQ	SQ	SQ	Fav	Fav	Pro	Fav	Fav	Pro
Cent	Neg	Fav	none	Anti	SQ	SQ	SQ	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti
Lib	Fav	Fav	SQ	SQ	None	SQ	Neg	Anti	Anti	Anti	SQ	Anti
Chr	SQ	SQ	SQ	SQ	None	None	SQ	SQ	Anti	Anti	Anti	Anti
Con	Fav	Fav	Pro	Pro	Fav	Fav	Fav	Pro	Pro	Pro	Pro	Pro
Prog	--	--	--	None	Fav	None	none	Pro	Pro	SQ	SQ	SQ

Key: Anti – indicates explicit opposition to EEC/EU membership
 Neg – indicates implicit negative attitude to participation in European integration
 SQ – indicates explicit defence of the status quo (FrP 2000: explicit ambiguity)
 none – indicates no reference to European integration, explicit or implicit
 Fav – indicates explicit favourable attitude to participation in closer European integration
 Pro – indicates explicit support for (application for) EEC/EU membership

Source: *Vi vil...! Norske partiprogrammer 1884–2001*, CD ROM Versjon 1.1. Bergen & Oslo: Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste & Institutt for samfunnsforskning, 2001; and 2005 party programmes as per party web-sites. 'Soc' denotes SF, and SV after its reorganisation.

Introduction", in S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, (London, The Free Press, 1967), p.50. On the debate, see P. Mair, *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997).

³ H. O. Frøland, "Ambiguous Interests: Norway and the West European Market Formations 1959-62", *Arena Working Paper*, 25 (1998).

⁴ J. Lyng argued that it was: *Mellom øst og vest: Erindringer 1965-1968*, (Oslo Cappelen, 1976).

The explicit party positions that were elaborated before the 1972 referendums have remained more or less the same since. As table 1 shows, most parties took a cautious approach to the European question in the 1960s, when the implications of closer association with the EEC were being explored and the basis for participation in European integration was still somewhat ambiguous. Even in 1969 only the two pro-EEC parties and the strongest opponent made this point explicit in their programmes. Since 1972, however, party positions have remained more or less fixed. The main change is in emphasis, with most parties apart from the Centre and Socialist Left playing down the issue after the first referendum and reviving it before the second. Only the Progress Party changed course, from neutrality when it was founded in 1973 toward a more pro-EEC stance. This kind of silence on the European question did not return after the 1994 referendum: only the Progress Party and the Liberals have avoided the question, and this reflects their move toward more or less neutral positions.

It is tempting, therefore, to conclude that party positions on European integration reflect social or political cleavages; be it left-right cleavages; old centre-periphery cleavages or a new integration cleavage between national and supranational politics. This has of course been done, notably in comparative West European analyses. Gary Marks and his collaborators have proposed cleavage theories of European integration that link Euroscepticism to the left-right cleavage, in a series of articles that take a broad-brush comparative approach to West European politics.⁵ Here Norway is anomalous for several reasons, particularly when ‘cleavages’ and ‘party families’ are taken as more or less equivalent. It goes against the purported trends of the centre-right becoming more Eurosceptic, and the centre-left less so; and the contrast is particularly stark if the Christian People’s Party is counted as part of the Christian Democrat family and the Centre Party as a liberal party. Simon Hix and his co-authors have explored the extent to which party positions in favour or against European integration can be considered a separate cleavage or issue dimension (mainly in the European Parliament), one that runs orthogonally to the left-right dimension.⁶ In this case Norway is less remarkable: Euroscepticism among the centre-parties reinforces the older centre-periphery cleavages that cross-cut left-right competition.⁷ However, this leaves Euroscepticism on the left flank of the party system unexplained; the

⁵ 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); G. marks & C. Wilson, The past in the present: A cleavage theory of party response to European integration, *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000) 433-59; L. Hooghe, G. Marks & C. J. Wilson, “Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35:8 (2002) 965–989; but these analyses are based on the decade beginning in 1986, L. Ray, “Measuring Party Orientations towards European Integration: Results from an Expert Survey”, *European Journal of Political Research* 36 (1999) 283-306.

⁶ S. Hix & C. Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union*, (London, Macmillan, 1997); 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”, *Comparative Political Studies* 35:8 (2002), 934-964

⁷ The centre parties are of course (confusingly in terminology) on the ‘periphery’ side; S. Rokkan, “Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism”, in R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).; 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).

origins of Socialist Left's opposition lies in other policy dimensions (foreign policy, participatory democracy).

Although it is sometimes useful to present Euroscepticism as a single cleavage or dimension when mapping party systems, this raises both theoretical and empirical questions. Summing up the literature on cleavages, Stefano Bartolini & Peter Mair define a cleavage to include an *empirical* element (i.e. objective social structure), a *normative* element (i.e. a subjective dimension) and an *organisational or behavioural* element (i.e. action or organisation), and therefore constituting a '*form of closure of social relationships*'.⁸ By such a definition divisions over European integration hardly qualify, and Euroscepticism becomes a dimension or policy issue rather than a cleavage. Even so, the variation in support for European integration among mainstream West European parties turns out to be more complex and plural if analysis is extended beyond the decade after the Single European Act, let alone if the Central European states are considered. Euroscepticism in centre-right parties varies considerably across the continent, with the British Conservatives, Fidesz in Hungary and the Czech Civic Democratic Party having adopted more Eurosceptic positions in the last decade, but their Scandinavian, German and Dutch counterparts have not following suit. On the centre-left the Greek, Spanish and Italian parties turned pro-EU as they entered office, and a few other parties have flirted with Euroscepticism when in opposition; in East Central Europe, social democrats have been solidly pro-EU, whether former communists or not.

The very plurality of policy stances and ideologies that have been invoked as the bases for opposition to European integration suggests that it is perhaps better understood as a 'touchstone of dissent' than as a single issue. The very term *Euroscepticism* has proven somewhat elusive, partly because of its origins as shorthand for opposition to European integration (which makes the term unavoidable, however problematic it might be), but also partly because of the variety of parties and factions that have mobilised opposition to various aspects of European integration. Hence Paul Taggart's suggestion Euroscepticism is best analysed as an encompassing term that "expresses the idea of contingent or qualified, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration."⁹ Perhaps the most useful distinctions, particularly with respect to the dynamics of change, is between opposition to European integration in principle and more contingent opposition linked to specific interests. Szczerbiak & Taggart's 'hard' and 'soft' labels are now widely used to capture this distinction.¹⁰ Although the question of whether a country should participate in closer European integration might be seen as dichotomous, opposition to participation in European integration ranges from absolute rejection to scepticism about particular initiatives. Euroscepticism entails opposition to something specific, but there is considerable variety in the bases for this opposition. At a tactical level, several parties have found it useful to invoke Euroscepticism in

⁸ S Bartolini & P. Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: the Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.216; D. W. Rae & M. Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970).

⁹ P. Taggart, 'A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary West European Party Systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 363-388, p.366.

¹⁰ 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); and their OUP volumes cited in Note 1.

electoral appeal against the governing party or coalition. Others have found that their main policies have a European dimension, and that opposition to government policy can be cast in term of opposition to integration. More principled objections to European integration include nationalism, concern for democracy or sovereignty, or even internationalist opposition to regional integration. To be sure, most Eurosceptic parties combine several of these elements. The common theme is dissent: opposition to government policy on European integration. Euroscepticism therefore emerges as a somewhat nebulous phenomenon, linked to a range of ideologies, strategies and tactics. Far from representing a single issue, let alone a new cleavage, parties' opposition to European integration is linked inextricably to the party system and patterns of competition.¹¹

If 'Euroscepticism' is thought of as a more or less 'empty box', into which a broad range of policy positions can be put, Norwegian party-based opposition to European integration is less amazing in the comparative context. Labour and the Conservatives' support for European integration is broadly comparable to most of their counterparts in small consensual democracies such as their Scandinavian neighbours, the Low Countries and the Alpine republics: based on economic policy and liberal ideologies. Something similar holds for the 'territorial' centre parties' scepticism, based on economic interests and cultural identity, although the comparisons would include Northern Italian or Bavarian parties and agrarian parties in East Central Europe.¹² Norwegian left socialist opposition to European integration has parallels both in the communist left and some 'new left' parties in Western Europe, though this picture is complicated somewhat by the fact that the far right is more Eurosceptic in most countries. Yet even if the 'box' is empty, Euroscepticism is elaborated as opposition to a specific project. When EU policy is opposed on the grounds that there is too much or too little regulation/redistribution/intervention in any given area, the policy content of Euroscepticism is cast in opposition to existing (or proposed) policy. Opposition is usually linked to a preferable domestic alternative. Although it can accommodate a wide range of policies, party-based Euroscepticism is shaped by the party system; it is a matter of a party's strategic decision. The second section duly turns to the link between party strategies and Euroscepticism.

Strategies of Opposition and Party-Based Euroscepticism

Although broad trends in party organisation, electoral competition and policy have been observed in Europe over time, this should not obscure the fact that distinct types of party strategy persist. The extent to which parties adapt and change depends on their organisation and preferences, and on how they interpret challenges, almost as

¹¹ This has been a common theme in much of the Scandinavian literature, see 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; 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; L. L. Ryden, *Ett Svenskt Dilemma: Socialdemokraterna, Centren och EG-Frågan 1975-1994*, (Göteborg: Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg, 2000); J. Saglie, *Standpunkter og strategi: EU-saken i norsk partipolitikk, 1989-1994*, (Universitetet i Oslo, 2000).

¹² The term 'territorial opposition' is from S. Rokkan D. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries* (London, Sage, 1983). The Northern League in Italy makes it Euroscepticism clear (e.g. programme for the 1999 EP elections, *Per una Padania libera in una libera Europa*); the Christian Social Union can be more Eurosceptic than its coalition partners (*Refromen für Europas Zukunft*, Leitansrag des Parteivorstandes, Nov. 2000).

much as on the actual challenges. Some are more immune to contagion from their competitors than others. Whereas most of the large centre-right and -left parties have faced strong incentives to adapt to their competitors' organisational and strategic changes, whether in the form of contagion from the left in the shape of successful social democrat parties or the catch-all parties on the centre-right, others have proven more resistant.¹³ Richard & Peter Katz Mair find that many catch-all parties are becoming more modern 'cartel' parties, but point out that these parties face challenges by for example protest parties.¹⁴ Many parties have found the catch-all model difficult to imitate, or rejected it. This applies to communists and greens on the left, agrarian and denominational parties in the centre, and new populist parties on the right. These alternatives are a matter of strategy as much as party organisation. Even if, over time, most parties may employ more full time professional party officials, rely more on public funding and less on activist mass memberships, or use the media and pollsters more extensively, it does not necessarily follow that they abandon their strategies of interest representation or protest. In other words, even if party organisations and tactics converge, strategies for competition remain different if some parties decide not to attempt to catch all of the electorate.

Borrowing from military and business studies, strategy may be defined as the link between goals and their achievement or 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.¹⁵ If a political party is defined along Sartori's lines as an organisation that seeks to propel its candidates into parliament, and usually government, in order to pursue specific policies,¹⁶ it follows that parties face four goals which are not always in complete harmony. In the classical party politics literature a party's key aims were the pursuit of votes and office.¹⁷ Others have since added the pursuit of policy, which in turn shapes both coalition games and the pursuit of votes; and the importance of internal party management and organisational survival.¹⁸ The key problem is that maximising one goal may mean compromising on another, hence the dilemmas of

¹³ Duverger, *Political Parties*; L. D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (London, Pall Mall Press, 1967); 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).

¹⁴ R. Katz & P. Mair (eds), *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*, (London, Sage Books, 1994); R. Katz & P. Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party", *Party Politics*, 1:1 (1995), 5-28.; R. Katz & P. Mair, "The Ascendancy of the Party in Public Office: Party Organizational Change in Twentieth-Century Democracies" and S. B. Wolinetz, "Beyond the Catch-All Party: Approaches to the Study of Parties and Party Organisation in Contemporary Democracies", both in R. Gunther & J. R. Montero/Juan J. Linz (eds.): *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges*, (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ C. von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, (Berlin, Dümmlers Verlag 1832); the last part paraphrases M. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, (New York, The Free Press, 1980).

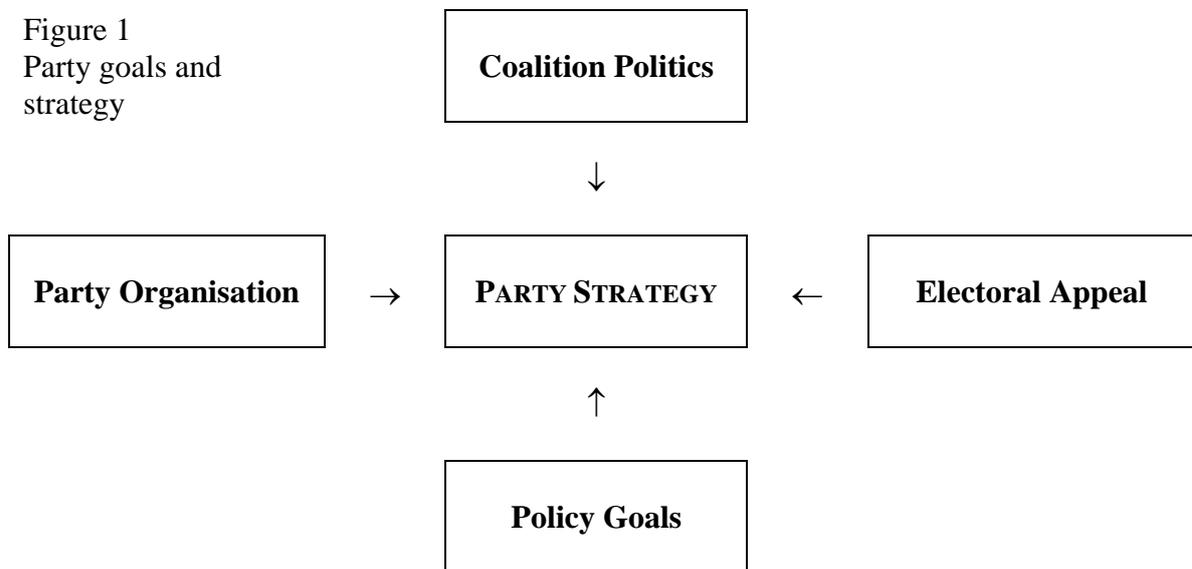
¹⁶ G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁷ 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).

¹⁸ 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; A. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

party strategy.¹⁹ Even for parties which ideology or policy preferences predispose them to strong pro- or anti-EU stances, the quest for votes and participation in coalition government shape their actual positions.

Figure 1
Party goals and strategy



Three ideal-type party strategies for competition can be extracted from the literature on government-opposition competition in West European politics.²⁰ This is largely a question of the party's position in the party system, relative to its competitors. First, competition along the central left-right dimension entails gaining sufficient strength to define this dimension (or aligning along it). This is the left vs. right dimension in West European politics, shaped by first by mass parties and later by the catch-all parties. However, a number of parties have chosen to appeal to a specific constituency based on interest and/or values, drawing draws on peripheries' defence of economic interest, culture, values or political autonomy in the face of central administration.²¹ This often means appealing across the main dimension, and therefore a second strategy that emphasises policy over vote maximisation, in contrast to the catch-all parties. Third, several parties have sought to circumvent the central left-right dimension, challenging the regime, the central elite 'cartel', or the entire political debate, from the flanks.²² Focus on the origins of parties (rather than 'families') helps prevent problematic classifications of for example the Scandinavian protestant Christian parties as continental-style Christian democrats. Although parties can and do change, and may transcend their original aims and organisation, a degree of continuity characterises most parties. Parties' origins and identity therefore tends to shape debates on how they should respond to new questions such as European integration.

¹⁹ K. Strom, 'A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties', *The American Journal of Political Science* 34:2 (1990), 565–598; W. C. Müller & K. Strom, "Political Parties and Hard Choices", in Müller & Strom (eds), *Policy, Office or Votes? How Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁰ 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).

²¹ S. Rokkan & D. Urwin (eds), *The Politics of Territorial Identity: Studies in European Regionalism*, (London, Sage Publications, 1982); S. Rokkan & D. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries*, (London, Sage, 1983).

²² P. Taggart, "New Populist Parties in Western Europe", *West European Politics*, 18:1 (1995), 34–51.

Figure 2 Parties and strategy	Protest: Competing at the flanks	Catch-all: Defining left vs. right	Interests: Cross-cutting left vs. right
– 1880		Elite party	
1880 –		Mass party	
1919 –	Anti-system party		Interest party
1945 –		Catch-all party	
1970 –	Protest and new populist parties	Cartel party	Single issue party

The European question is likely to play out according to different dynamics across the three sets of strategies. Although these are of course ideal-types, and real political parties hardly follow these ‘pure’ strategies, the trade-off between policy, votes and office, and even party management, play out somewhat differently for parties that are closer to each of the three strategies. If a party’s core values are incompatible with supranational governance or its ideology and policy preferences jar with those of the EU, there is a substantive base for Euroscepticism. Yet, the more immediate concerns of maximising votes and winning office are more sensitive to institutional pressure, and may provide incentives for a party to soften Euroscepticism (or to modify a pro-EU stance). The party’s position relative to its target electorate depends a mixture of the two types of pressure. If opposition to European integration is linked to policy or ideological commitment, it is more likely to be located at one (or both) wings of any particular policy dimension than at the centre. Euro-sceptic appeal might therefore limit a party’s appeal to ‘neutral’ voters. Participation in coalition governments that are party to EU deals may involve considerable costs for Eurosceptic parties. Given that the strategies of cross-cutting and flanking opposition entail at least partial rejection of the catch-all strategy, these dynamics cannot be expected to play out the same way across the three strategies.

First, the catch-all parties that compete on the mainstream dimension are the least likely candidates for party-based Euroscepticism. This strategy entails maximising votes and prioritising the pursuit of office, while playing down ideology and policy commitments, and to some extent marginalising party activists in favour of professionals. When parties take part in what is after all a largely government-driven integration process, adopting a principled stance against European integration is problematic. Moderate Euroscepticism in the form of opposition to specific policy proposals is another matter. Even this is more difficult when in government, as parties have to defend compromises they engage in. However, in opposition the degree of

Euroscepticism depends on the strategy for competition, with Euroscepticism associated with moves toward adversarial (centrifugal) rather than centripetal competition. Furthermore, in divided parties, party discipline is notoriously more difficult to maintain when in opposition, and dissent is therefore more likely to be vented.

Second, the parties that compete across the mainstream dimension are more likely candidates for both soft (policy-based) and harder (principled) opposition to European integration. Parties face a fundamental choice whether they seek to shape the main dimension of the party system, or to circumvent it. Several parties have chosen the latter, mobilising voters along cross-cutting cleavages or policy dimensions. They are less likely to be disciplined by the quest for office, and it is also possible that policies that defend the interests of specific groups such as farmers warrant a degree of Euroscepticism. The central point is that Euroscepticism is related to territorial, cultural or economic *opposition*, not merely cleavages or parties as such. Unless a party actually challenges the policies of the mainstream catch-all parties, Euroscepticism should not be expected among third parties. Others even see the EU as a useful constraint on the national government: most 'ethnic' parties, with the notable exception of Northern Ireland (and partly the Flemish Bloc), are pro-EU.²³

Third, as far as the parties that compete on the flanks are concerned, both ideological and populist anti-establishment positions and the 'touchstone of dissent' strategy link the new politics and new populist parties to Euro-scepticism. Orthodox communist parties could be added to the list, both in West and East Central Europe. Flanking parties have generally been excluded from coalition games, although this may be changing. Far right parties have participated in government in Italy, Austria and the Netherlands, and support minority centre-right coalitions in Denmark and Norway. However, if Euroscepticism is driven largely by their strategy of opposition, flanking Euroscepticism might be crowded out by mainstream Eurosceptic parties, as appears to have been the case in Hungary (where Fidesz had marginalised MIEP).

The central hypotheses regarding patterns of party-based Euroscepticism are therefore based on a model of Euroscepticism as the politics of opposition, where patterns of competition shape the translation of the European question into party politics. First, principled 'hard' Euroscepticism is not expected in catch-all parties that compete along the main (socio-economic) left-right dimension; although softer, policy-based opposition to aspects of European integration may be expected, particularly when a party is in out of office. Second, interest- or value-based parties' propensity toward Euroscepticism should be driven by the extent to which they perceive the state as their ally or a threat, or their core policy preferences are compatible with the relevant EU policies. Third, both populist anti-establishment stances and the 'touchstone of dissent' strategy link the 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. Finally, along both the second and third dimension of competition, Eurosceptic parties should be expected to modify or avoid Euroscepticism 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 Euroscepticism develop as

²³ L. De Winter, "The Impact of European Integration on Ethnoregionalist Parties", Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials Working Paper no. 195, Barcelona, 2001; see also L. Ray's data set, cited above, Note 5.

strategies of opposition and coalition building evolve. The third and last section explores Norwegian party-based Euroscepticism in this comparative context.

The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Norway

First, although all Norwegian parties have become more ‘professionalised’ only two of them warrant the classification of catch-all parties in Kirchheimer’s sense – Labour and the Conservatives. Dating back to the introduction of parliamentary rule in the 1880s, these parties come close to their West European ideal types of a conservative party on the right that adopts a free market position and a social democratic 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 the two parties against each other as the main opponent and entails a 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.²⁴ 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 Eurosceptics opponents, Labour particularly in the early 1970s and the Conservatives in the 1990s. 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 government. On the other hand, the two parties perceive each other as their main opponents, and their own role when the other is in office therefore entails a degree of opposition to the other’s initiatives. Hence Labour’s criticism of the centre-right governments’ timid positions on European integration in the second half of the 1960s and the Conservatives’ similar criticism of Labour during the EEA negotiations in the early 1990s.

Labour and the Conservatives have thus defied the more usual West European pattern of adopting slightly more Eurosceptic positions when in opposition than in government; reversing this pattern largely because of their need for support from Eurosceptic parties when in office, whether in coalitions or as minority governments. In other respects they are close to their counterparts, particularly in Scandinavia where free-market-oriented Conservative parties have long seen European integration as an ideologically attractive proposition, in line with their free-market policy-orientation and ideology (this also holds for the Danish Liberals, who have long left their agrarian background for a catch-all strategy). Only the social democrats have featured substantial Eurosceptic factions, and these can be traced to a combination of resistance to an EU-driven free market that might undermine the domestic welfare

²⁴ 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; 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.

state and scepticism toward political unification. Only the Swedish party opposed EEC membership in principle, and this position was reversed after the end of the Cold War. The opposition to European integration found in some mainstream centre-right and-left parties in Europe tends to be the exception rather than the rule, although most centre-left parties feature Eurosceptic factions of considerable strength. Euroscepticism has tended to be associated with periods out of office. On the West European left PASOK in Greece quietly dropped its opposition to European integration when it entered office in 1981, for the Italian Communists in the 1970s and the British Labour party a decade later mere aspiration for office was enough to abandon Euroscepticism, and much the same held for the SPD in Germany when it sought to defeat Kohl in the 1990s (but not for French socialists).²⁵ In East Central Europe, social democrats have been solidly pro-EU, whether former communists or not. On the centre right the British Conservatives, Fidesz in Hungary and the Czech Civic Democratic Party having adopted more Eurosceptic positions, which strengthened as they went into opposition but is linked both to free-market policy and nationalism (in the Gellnerian sense that the nation should govern itself).²⁶

Second, the three Norwegian 'centre' parties, the Christian People's Party, the Liberals and Centre Party, come closer to the 'interest party' idea-type. This characterisation applies best to the Centre Party, and least to the Liberals. Although moves towards catch-all like electoral strategies have been associated with opening up the European question in the Christian and Liberal parties, the Centre Party's appeal to a clearly Eurosceptic electorate has helped it capture Eurosceptic voters from other parties, (as in 1993, when the European question was salient). In the Centre Party's case this has yielded hard principled Euroscepticism, which combines economic and value-based rejection of supranational integration, as opposed to the softer contingent or qualified opposition found in the Christian People's Party and the Liberals (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 coalitions politics on the centre parties' Euroscepticism has been limited. Given that 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.

The persistent opposition to European integration that the three centre parties have maintained (and still maintain, despite debates in the Christian People's Party and the Liberal's recent move almost to neutrality), stands in considerable contrast to that of the other Scandinavian centre parties. The Danish Christian People's Party has shifted back and forth on the issue, the Swedish Christian Democrats and agrarian Centre Party both adopted pro-EU positions in the 1990s, as did the Finnish Centre party. Even the once-staunchly Eurosceptic Finnish Christian League has changed both its

²⁵ C. Lees, "'Dark Matter': Institutional Constraints and the Failure of Party-Based Euroscepticism in Germany", *Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No. 8*, University of Sussex, 2002; S. Verney, "The Greek Socialists", in J. Gaffney (ed.) *Political Parties and the European Union*, (London, Routledge, 1996); A. Bosco, *Comunisti: Trasformazioni di Partito in Italia, Spagna e Protogallo*, Bologna, 2000.

²⁶ S. Hanley, "The New Right in Europe? Unravelling the Ideology of 'Czech Thatcherism'", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 4:2 (1999), 169–78; A. Batory, "Attitudes to Europe: Ideology, Strategy and the Issue of European Union Membership in Hungarian Party Politics", *Party Politics*, 8:5 (2002), 525–539; E. Gellner defined nationalism as the political doctrine that the world is divided into nations and that states and nations should be congruent (for self-government), *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1983); see also E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (London, Hutchinson, 1960).

name and its stance on European integration.²⁷ In the two Centre parties' cases, the combination of changed circumstances after the end of the Cold War, the Social Democrat competitors' conversions to pro-EU stances and their own quest for office were key factors in explaining this; by contrast the East Central European agrarian parties have not faced similar incentives.²⁸ For the parties that shifted to pro-EU positions after their country joined the EU, in this case the Finnish Christian party, the change in the status quo may also have played a role. The reverse logic is that the Norwegian Centre Parties face little policy-driven pressure to change their position. The European Economic Area arrangement permits commitment to a status quo that involves considerable actual participation in European integration (and only the Centre Party and the Socialist Left opposed EEA membership). This would of course change if Norway were to join the EU. For many centre parties (outside Norway) it seems that after EU membership the form of Euroscepticism softens: to scepticism toward further integration (such as EMU) rather than opposition to membership.

Third, the other alternative to catch-all competition, new (or 'new left') populism has been taken up by the two younger parties, the Socialist Left and Progress Party. Again the difference with 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, these two have never been in government, although the Socialist Left is now poised to enter a coalition for the first time. The Socialist Left's roots in Labour's neutralist, anti-NATO and anti-EU left wing makes modification of its hard Eurosceptic stance difficult both from a policy standpoint and in terms of its electoral appeal (although both parties' electorates as split almost down the middle on the EU issue).²⁹ On the far right, the free-market low-tax orientation of the Progress Party 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 EU membership, and it has lacked the unity on international affairs that has characterised the Socialist Left. Although the Progress 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.³⁰ As it faces few incentives for or against Euroscepticism at the electoral level, where it has recently made deep inroads into the Conservatives' electoral base, the party's main drivers on the European

²⁷ On the Christian parties, see J. Madeley & N. Sitter, "Differential Euroscepticism Among the Nordic Christian Parties: Protestantism or Protest?", paper presented to the Political Science Association Conference, Leicester, 15–17 April 2003.; on Finland see T. Raunio, "Facing the European Challenge: Finnish Parties Adjust to the Integration Process", *West European Politics*, 22:1 (1999), 138-159.

²⁸ A. Batory & N. Sitter Cleavages, Competition, and Coalition-building: Agrarian Parties and the European Question in Western and Eastern Europe', *The European Journal of Political Research*, 43:4 (2004), 523-546.

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. A poll by Opinion commissioned by the NRK (26./04/2004) has the Conservative supporters' yes/no percentage ratio at 80/12 and Labour's at 62/22; followed by the Liberals at 64/24, Progress Party at 42/46, Socialist Left 34/47, Chr. People's Party at 21/62 and Centre at 0/94.

³⁰ 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.

question are policy and coalition politics. Its recent more protectionist and interventionist stance may be driving 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 appear to be few votes to be gained. Both flanking parties' leaderships are flirting with more conventional catch-all strategies that move them closer to mainstream government-opposition competition.

The contrast with other European parties is much stronger on the right flank than on the new left (where some green parties fit as well). The Scandinavian left and green parties have generally opposed or been sceptical to European integration on similar grounds as the Socialist Left in Norway, though the Denmark's Socialist People's Party has been prepared to advocate 'yes' votes in referendums after negotiating cross-party pacts with the other parties (except the far right).³¹ The party has now come around to a pro-EU position, but it has modified its overall left-wing position in general. Only in Finland is there no longer any 'new left' opposition to the EU, although the Left and Green Leagues' formal neutrality on the EU issues masks considerable internal opposition to participation in European integration.³² This far left opposition to the EU also fits the older patterns of far left parties, the unreformed or orthodox communist parties in both new and old member states. However, the Norwegian pattern on the populist right contrasts sharply with that found elsewhere in Europe, where far right parties tend to oppose European integration. This holds for established parties such as the French National Front, and to a lesser extent for the post-fascist National Alliance in Italy, as well as more recent parties such as the Freedom Party in Austria ('recent' if taking into account its change in the 1980s) and List Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands.³³ Yet the Norwegian case is not unique, and not only inasmuch as the Progress Party is somewhat more moderate than the above-cited cases. The free market orientation of the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties long provided a modifying factor to any Euroscepticism they might harbour (but this does not apply to the new Danish far right party, the Danish People's Party), and the Swedish New Democracy, briefly represented in parliament between 1991 and 1994, also cast its support of EU membership in terms of defence and security, and reducing taxes to EU levels. Moreover, the Freedom Party, National Alliance and the List Pim Fortuyn all played down Euro-scepticism during campaigns in competition with their mainstream centre-right rivals.

In short, considered on a case-by-case (or rather strategy-by-strategy) basis the Norwegian parties hardly appear amazingly Eurosceptic. What is remarkable is that there are Eurosceptic parties across the party system, except on the far right where

³¹ This was the case in the second Maastricht referendum, and in the planned referendum on the Constitutional Treaty this year; P. Svensson, 'The Danish Yest to Maastricht and Edinburgh: The Referendum of May 1993', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 17/1 (1994), 69-82; "En historisk aftale", *Politikken*, 7 November 2004.

³² T. Rauino [chapter on Finland] in P. Taggart & A. Szczerbiak (eds), *The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, (Oxford University Press, 2005).

³³ P. Taggart, 'A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary West European Party Systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 363-388; C. Fieschi, J. Shields & R. Woods, "Extreme Right-Wing Parties and the European Union: France, Germany and Italy", J. Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*, (London: Routledge, 1996); R. Harmsen, "Europe and the Dutch Parliamentary Election of May 2002", *Opposing Europe Research Network Election Briefing No. 3*, University of Sussex 2002.

they are most commonly found in other countries, and that their positions have been so persistent. Only part of this can be explained in terms of ideology and voter or policy preferences; these patterns also reflect policy alternatives and coalition games. Because Norway is associated with the EU through the EEA but not full membership, there has been little policy-driven pressure on Eurosceptic parties to adjust in the same way that other Scandinavian Eurosceptic parties have changed. More importantly, this has made it possible to anchor coalition governments in the status quo, a kind of quasi-membership that makes it possible even for fully Eurosceptic parties to participate in government (or even run a fully Eurosceptic minority cabinet, was the case between 1997 and 2000). In EU states the quest for office tends to make parties modify their positions on European integration; in Norway this has forced the Conservatives to put their quest for membership on ice. In place of a 'proper' conclusion, the concluding section turns to the prospect for an equally successful second suicide pact under the incoming 'Red-Green' coalition.

In Lieu of a Conclusion – Another Four-Year Freeze on the European Question?

The factors that shape party-based Euroscepticism are not stable, in Norway or elsewhere in Europe. Despite the strength of hard Euroscepticism in the Centre Party and much of the Socialist Left, party-based opposition to European integration is far more contingent than the continuities between 1972, 1994 and the present day might suggest. Its 'freezing' and change is linked to party competition and party system stability, particularly in terms of the distinction between pro-EU catch-all parties and the more Eurosceptic parties on the flanks or engaged in territorial opposition. Although the European question has, therefore, been integrated with existing dimensions of opposition, it has exercised a disruptive influence on coalition politics on the centre-right and party unity on the left. It hangs like Damocles' sword over most Norwegian governments. Sometimes it is tightly secured, sometimes less so.

The government that just left office kept the issue firmly off the agenda by agreeing a 'suicide clause' that meant that the coalition would break up if the Conservatives were to push for EU membership. The Red-Green parties have agreed a similar clause, but there are three reasons the dynamics may be somewhat different. First, both the Socialist Left and the Centre party advocate making use of the so-called 'EEA-veto'. This is un-chartered waters, and might trigger an EEA-crisis. The rules provide for six months' negotiations, possibly followed by suspension of part of the EEA treaty. At any rate, such a move would certainly reinvigorate the European debate. Second, in the event something goes wrong for the coalition, Labour is in a stronger position to form a minority government than the Conservatives were during the last parliament. Because Labour occupies something like a median position in the Storting, raising the EU question need not be quite as 'suicidal' as it would have been for the Conservatives over the last four years. Third, unlike Labour over the last four years, the Conservatives now have little reason not to play the EU card. They are less internally divided, and are not constrained to keep it off the agenda. Solberg now suggests that 2007 might be the right time to raise the membership question. In short, although the Red-Green parties may hope to kill off the EU issue as effectively as the centre-right parties did, this might prove more difficult. Keeping the European question off the agenda will require more careful management than it did during the last parliament.