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Sussex v. North Carolina: The Comparative Study of Party-Based Euroscepticism

Cas Mudde, *DePauw University*



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**European Parties Elections
and Referendums Network**

Sussex v. North Carolina
The Comparative Study of Party-Based
Euroscepticism

Cas Mudde
DePauw University
casmudde@depauw.edu

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University of Sussex, Falmer,
Brighton BN1 9RG
Tel: 01273 678578
Fax: 01273 678571
Email:
sei@sussex.ac.uk

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s a true cottage industry of ‘Euro scepticism studies’ has emerged, which has given way to hundreds of publications in increasingly prominent journals. This working paper looks at two of the most important ‘schools’ of Euro scepticism studies: Sussex and North Carolina. The two differ in many ways – e.g. definition, data and methods, scope – but account for much of the academic output on the topic. I first shortly describe the major publications of the two schools, before comparing and contrasting them on the basis of some key dimensions (definition, data, scope, explanations). The paper then discusses the crucial ‘so what question,’ by focusing on the Achilles heel of Euro scepticism studies: salience. Finally, I propose ways in which the two schools can be better integrated and suggest some avenues of research for the post-crisis period.

Sussex v. North Carolina

The Comparative Study of Party Based Euroscepticism

Cas Mudde

DePauw University

1. Introduction

For much of the postwar period the process of European integration was studied as part of the sub-field of International Relations rather than Comparative Politics. Even when the approach to ‘EU Studies’ was broadened, the field remained largely detached from mainstream Comparative Politics and was the singular domain of avowed Europhiles, who had little eye or time for criticism of the European institutions or process. This changed only in the 1990s, in part by party and public responses to the Maastricht Treaty, which not only blurred the boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, but also between the new EU studies and the traditional studies of European politics. Since then, a true cottage industry of ‘Euroscepticism studies’ has emerged, which has given way to hundreds of publications in increasingly prominent journals (not in the least the new *European Union Politics*).

This review article looks at two of the most important ‘schools’ of Euroscepticism studies: Sussex and North Carolina. The two differ in many ways – e.g. definition, data and methods, scope – but account for much of the academic output on the topic. In the past years both have published defining works, which have inspired scholars around the world, but not so much each other. With the exception of some obligatory cross-citations, the Sussex and North Carolina Schools hardly communicate with each other, thereby hindering the accumulation of knowledge and inefficiently using what are still rather limited resources.

First, I will shortly describe the major publications of the two schools, before comparing and contrasting them on the basis of some key dimensions (definition, data, scope, explanations). I then discuss the crucial ‘so what question,’ by focusing on the Achilles heel of Euroscepticism studies: salience. Finally, I propose ways in

which the two schools can be better integrated and suggest some avenues of research for the post-crisis period.

2. The Sussex School

Like this article, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism* took a lot longer to produce than initially envisioned. This is not surprising, given that the two volumes together include 30 chapters, written by a total of 37 different authors. However, as most chapters were originally submitted several years before the publication of the volumes, and some were hardly updated since, various chapters are rather dated, ending around 2005, or in the case of the postcommunist countries at the time of (the referendum on) accession to the EU.

Opposing Europe? is the *magnum opus* of the long-term research project of Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart at the University of Sussex.¹ Its intellectual genesis is Taggart's seminal 1998 article 'A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems,' the first attempt to comparatively and systematically research party-based Euroscepticism.² Over the years the two scholars created a (virtual) infrastructure for the study of Euroscepticism, initially entitled Opposing Europe Research Network (OERN) and later changed to European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN), in part as a consequence of a broadening of its research agenda. EPERN has become the leading network for the study of Euroscepticism in (Eastern and Western) Europe and includes virtually all main European scholars on the topic.³

The first volume, "Case Studies and Country Surveys" (*OEI*), starts with an introductory chapter by the editors, which lays out the larger conceptual and theoretical framework. Essential to the project is their well-known distinction between "Hard" and "Soft" Euroscepticism:

¹ Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (eds.), *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 2 volumes.

² Paul Taggart, 'A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.33, No.3, 1998, 363-388.

³ In 2011 several scholars of the Sussex School were involved in the creation of the "Collaborative Research Network on Euroscepticism" within the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES).

***Hard** Euroscepticism is where there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived (p.7)*

***Soft** Euroscepticism is where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory (p.8).*

The country cases include members of all waves of accession: founding members (Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy), early joiners (Britain, Denmark, and Ireland), post-authoritarians of the 1970s (Spain), late West European joiners (Austria, Finland, and Sweden), and the first East Europeans (Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Finally, it includes one of the few outsiders, Norway. The focus and quality of the 18 short country chapters differ greatly; while some mostly describe the party-based Euroscepticism in their respective country, others devote most attention to explaining its absence/presence. Although repetition is inevitable in such a project, the editing could have been stricter; for example, various chapters repeat the definitions of hard and soft Euroscepticism.

All country chapters use (only) the editors' definition and typology of Euroscepticism, but many struggle with distinguishing between the soft and hard types in practice, i.e. between "principled opposition" and "qualified objection", and some find it hard to categorize parties as Eurosceptic or not. More problematic, from a comparative perspective, is that different authors seem to have different understandings of the concepts, leading them to categorize fairly similar parties differently. This is most striking in the case of the postcommunist countries, where the issue of EU membership (largely absent in member states) dominates the debate and categorization. This also makes the discussions on the new member states, in

particular, rather dated, as they have changed significantly since these countries became EU member states.

The first volume ends with a comparative conclusion, in which the editors summarize the previous discussions on the basis of a typology of (three) patterns of party competition over Europe: *limited contestation*, in which no major party is Eurosceptic, *open contestation*, in which one of the major parties is Eurosceptic, and *constrained contestation*, i.e. “party systems in which European issues play a role and where Euroscepticism is certainly present, but where there appears to be less likelihood of European issues affecting domestic party competition directly” (p.349). The first is the dominant type in (Western) Europe, the second the rarest (but most discussed). The third type seems transitional, as the editors also suggest (p.361), including only (but not all) new EU member states; it is largely a reflection of the debate over EU membership in the East. An updated categorization would reassign most cases of the third category to the first (as the editors also predict; p.363).

The second volume, “Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives” (OE2), addresses conceptual and theoretical issues from a comparative European perspective. In the introduction the editors problematize their own conceptual framework and lay out the structure of the book. Consequent chapters look at the causes of Euroscepticism in party systems (institutional structures and ideology versus strategy, respectively); the role of transnational party federations; Euroscepticism in the European Parliament, in national parliaments, and among sub-national elites; and at non-voting in European elections as evidence of Euroscepticism. Although all these chapters focus on difference aspects, they all notice one thing: Euroscepticism is not that relevant in European politics.

3. The North Carolina School

The genesis of the North Carolina School is the dissertation research of Leonard Ray at the University of North Carolina (UNC), part of which was published in his influential 1999 research note ‘Measuring Party Orientation towards European

Integration: Results from an Expert Study.’⁴ Although Ray has since moved to Louisiana State University, he and his former UNC colleagues (notably Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks) have continued to expand their unique dataset and create an extremely prolific research community extending well beyond North Carolina and even the United States.

The main works of the North Carolina school have been published in various academic journals over the past decade, most notably in the special issues “Understanding Euroscepticism” of *Acta Politica*⁵ and “What Drives Euroscepticism?” of *European Union Politics*.⁶ I will focus here primarily on the key publications on *party*-based Euroscepticism, the essence of the North Carolina dataset, even though members of the group have also worked on Euroscepticism at the mass level and in the media.

Ray’s 1999 ‘research note’ mainly introduced the North Carolina dataset; in fact, the article itself was as long as the appendix, which listed the main questions of the “expert survey” and the average scores of all individual parties per country. The various “experts” had been asked to evaluate all major political parties in their country on the basis of their overall orientation of the *party leadership* towards European integration; the relative importance of this issue in the *party’s public stance*; and the *degree of dissent* within the party over the party leadership’s position (p.295). As Ray had asked them to evaluate these positions at four different periods in time (1984, 1988, 1992 and 1996), most findings reported in his research note are about trends in the 1984-1996 period. Most notably, he argued that, on average, parties had become more pro-European, and the salience of the issue as well as the extent of intra-party disagreement had increased.

In later work, Ray and his North Carolina colleagues have mostly looked into the effects and explanations of party positions on European integration. For example, by combining data from the expert surveys and the Eurobarometer surveys, Ray found

⁴ Leonard Ray, ‘Measuring party orientation towards European integration: results from an expert study’, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.36, 1999, 283-306.

⁵ Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (eds.), ‘Understanding Euroscepticism’, *Acta Politica*, Vol.42, Nos.2-3, 2007.

⁶ Liesbet Hooghe (ed.), ‘What drives Euroscepticism?’, *European Union Politics*, Vol.8, No.5, 2007.

that “party positions do influence electorate opinion, but that this effect varies with levels of disagreement among parties, party unity, issue salience, and party attachment.”⁷ In the *EUP* special issue, Marco Steenbergen, Erica Edwards and Catherine de Vries elaborate this finding by developing “a dual-process model, whereby party elites both respond to and shape the views of their supporters” (p.13).

Probably the most influential contribution to the broader study of political parties and European politics has been the cleavage theory of party positions on European integration, which has become the theoretical foundation of the school.⁸ Building upon the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan, the North Carolina School argues that party positions on European integration are the reflection of a new cleavage in European politics, which in later work was labeled rather clumsily Green/alternative/liberal versus traditional/authoritarian/nationalist or the GAL-TAN dimension.⁹ Consequently, Euroscepticism is almost exclusively to be found among the ideologically “extreme” parties.¹⁰

4. Comparing the Two ‘Schools’

It is clear that the Sussex and North Carolina Schools have very different approaches to the study of Euroscepticism. This section compares the two schools on the basis of four of the most important issues: definitions, data and method, scope, and explanations.

4.1. Definitions

The issue of definitions has always plagued the Sussex group and is taken up by various authors in both volumes of *Opposing Europe?*. In the concluding chapter of

⁷ Leonard Ray, ‘When parties matter: the conditional influence of party positions on voter opinions about European integration’, *Journal of Politics*, Vol.65, No.4, 2003, 978-994.

⁸ Gary Marks, Carole J. Wilson and Leonard Ray, ‘National political parties and European integration’, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.46, No.3, 2002, 585-594.

⁹ See, respectively, Gary Marks and Carole J. Wilson, ‘The past in the present: a cleavage theory of party response to European integration’, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 30, 2000, 433-459; and Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and Carole J. Wilson, ‘Does left/right structure party positions on European integration?’, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.35, No.8, 2002, 965-989.

OE2, Szczerbiak and Taggart devote most of their attention to conceptual issues, including the revision of their own initial (working) definitions of hard and soft Euroscepticism. In line with critique from Petr Kopecky and I,¹¹ they agree that

the key variables in determining party attitudes should be first, underlying support for or opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU (rather than a party's support for or opposition to their country's membership at any given time) and, secondly, attitudes towards further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies (p.242).

In the end, they redefine Hard Euroscepticism as “principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU” and Soft Euroscepticism as “not a principled objection to the European integration project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, but (...) opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory based on the *further* extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make” (pp.247-8).

At the same time, they struggle to construct a clear division between Hard and Soft Euroscepticism, debating whether it should be the quantity or the quality of the opposed policies. They suggest to specify “some areas of policy that are core parts of the European project as embodied in the EU or encapsulate its current/future trajectory,” but acknowledge that “this is open to dispute” (p.250). One could also look at it from the other side of the equation, and ask what are the core areas for the political party in question? For example, while opposition to the economic policy of the EU might be secondary to a populist radical right party, it will be primary to a communist party. Hence, if the former stresses this, it indicates Soft Euroscepticism, while in the case of the latter it would (have to) lead to Hard Euroscepticism.

¹⁰ Allegedly, this applies to both party-based and mass-level Euroscepticism. See also Catherine de Vries and Erica Edwards, ‘Taking Europe to its extremes: extremist parties and public Euroscepticism’, *Party Politics*, Vol.15, No.1, 2009, 5-28.

¹¹ Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, ‘The two sides of Euroscepticism: party positions on European integration in East Central Europe’, *European Union Politics*, Vol.3, No.3, 2002, 297-326.

Szczerbiak and Taggart argue that their revised concept of Euroscepticism should be part of a broader typology of party positions on Europe, which also allows for the distinguishing between “principled” and “contingent” support for European integration. At the same time, they are worried that “the more complex and fine-grained the typology, the more difficult it is to operationalize and categorize the parties” (p.246). Pointing to the shared experience of the *OE* contributors, they argue that “parties rarely elaborate their policies on the key issues on European integration in such detail that we can properly categorize them” (p.246). While I believe that this is mostly an effect of the selection of party literature (see 4.2), this might also simply be another reflection of the low salience of the European issue to most political parties (see 5).

Overall, debates over the best definition of Euroscepticism are largely absent from the North Carolina School. Ray doesn’t even use the term Euroscepticism in his original research note. The survey simply asks “experts” to evaluate “the overall orientation of the *party leadership* towards European integration” on the basis of the following categories: (1) strongly opposed; (2) opposed; (3) somewhat opposed; (4) neutral, no stance on the issue; (5) somewhat in favor; (6) in favor; and (7) strongly in favor (p.295). Ray argues that while he “deliberately left the interpretation of ‘European integration’ up to the experts themselves” (p.286), there was a lot of consistency among experts, which suggests to him that “they were evaluating the parties on the same underlying dimension” (p.287). Given the significant confusion and differences among the true experts of the Sussex School, this seems an overly optimistic conclusion (see also 4.2).

In his article “Mainstream Euroskepticism: Trend or Oxymoron?,” in the double special issue of *Acta Politica*, Ray operationalizes Euroscepticism by combining the North Carolina seven-point scale and the Sussex categorization of Hard and Soft Euroscepticism.

While the question employed in the expert survey did not ask about Taggart and Szczerbiak’s [sic] distinction between hard and soft Euroskeptics, with a little imagination, one can see a block of hard

Euroskeptic parties from 1 to 2 on the scale, and a block of softer Euroskeptic parties from 2 to 3.5 or perhaps 4 on the scale (p.157).

The operationalization of Hard Euroscepticism makes sense conceptually, as both “strongly opposed” and “opposed” seem to measure “principled opposition.” This cannot be said of the operationalization of Soft Euroscepticism, however. First of all, the value of 3.5 is a statistical construct without a particular meaning. Second, the suggestion that a neutral stance and a no opinion on European integration (a 4 on this scale) equals Euroscepticism, Soft or not, lacks any basis. And this operationalization is even more problematic in light of the generally low salience of the European issue for parties in and outside of the EU. In fact, it would make at least as much sense to argue that a score of 5 measures Soft Euroscepticism, as it indicates that the party is only “somewhat in favor” of European integration.¹²

Interestingly, a couple of *Acta Politica* pieces on mass-based Euroscepticism do tackle the definition issue more conceptually, suggesting original alternative typologies. For example, Andre Krouwel and Koen Abts develop a two-dimensional conceptualization on the basis of the targets and degree of popular discontent towards the EU and European integration. Bernhard Weßels constructs an Eastonian ‘hierarchical model of euroscepticism’ (p.287) based on the diffuse or specific mode of orientation towards the European authority, regime and community. While both models are developed to measure mass-level Euroscepticism, and are overly complex, they could provide important insights for revisions of the definition and typology of party positions on the EU and European integration.¹³

4.2. Data

The Sussex School initially did not really address the data issue, i.e. on the basis of which sources party-based Euroscepticism should be researched. In the introductory chapter of *OEI* the editors merely note that they “suggested that the focus be on official party positions where they exist rather than with the positions of party voters,

¹² I thank Maryann Gallagher for pointing this out to me.

activists, or MPs.” They add, somewhat contradictory: “In measuring how Eurosceptical a party is, we therefore suggested focusing on a party’s public statements, the parliamentary voting on key European issues (treaties), and published party programmes/manifestos” (p.9). Consequently, different authors use different sources and consign different importance to similar sources. Most authors seem to work predominantly on the basis of official party literature, most notably election and party programs, but others assign at least as much importance, if not more, to votes on treaties or statements of individual party representatives in the media.

The editors are aware of the confusion, which they consider the consequence of “different processes associated with (a) Euroscepticism as a broad underlying position that political parties take on Europe and (b) whether they use the European project as an issue of contestation” (p.9). As they acknowledge, these ‘processes’ can have very different explanations. To a certain extent, they refer to the difference in ideology and policy, which relate not just to the question of explanations (see also 4.4.), but also to the question of data collection. While party ideology is best studied by a “causal chain approach” (or “thick reading”) of both externally and internally-oriented party literature,¹⁴ policies can be found in election manifestos, MPs’ statements, and votes. Moreover, policy positions can easier be measured quantitatively; for example, through the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP).¹⁵

The data of the North Carolina School are both its strength and weakness. Its strength, and the key reasons for its popularity, is that the data set is longitudinal, quantitative, and easily accessible. Its weakness is the source of the data, i.e. the so-called ‘experts’ that fill out the surveys. Rather than sending out a survey to one or two scholars of Euroscepticism, or party positions on Europe, in a particular country at a particular time, i.e. true experts, initially surveys were sent out to 258 scholars to cover a total of 18 countries for four elections at one time (1984, 1988, 1992 and 1996). Few of these

¹³ Another interesting suggestion of ‘varieties of Euroscepticism’ is offered by Cécile Lefonte, who distinguishes between utilitarian, political, value-based, and cultural Euroscepticism. See Cécile Lefonte, *Understanding Euroscepticism*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

¹⁴ See the discussion on studying party ideology in Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, 18-24.

¹⁵ See, for example, Gary Marks, Liesbet Hooghe, Marco R. Steenbergen and Ryan Bakker, Crossvalidating data on party positioning on European integration’, *Electoral Studies*, Vol.26, No.1, 2007, 23-38.

scholars worked specifically on party positions on European integration in general, or Euroscepticism in particular. According to Ray, they were “indigenous political scientists ... [who] specialized in either the domestic political system of their nation, or European politics.”¹⁶ Hence, rather than an expert study, this is really a *peer survey*! This is even more problematic in light of the confusion noted above; i.e. even among the true experts of the *Opposing Europe?* project there was both confusion and disagreement about how to categorize many important parties. So, if the true experts are unsure, how can the broader scholarly community provide valid (rather than merely reliable) data?¹⁷

4.3. Scope

From the outset, the Sussex School has had a rather limited scope, focusing predominantly, and sometimes exclusively, on Euroscepticism at the party level. Although it broadened its focus to also include Euroscepticism in the various Accession Referendums,¹⁸ particularly at the height of the first postcommunist accession debate (2000-2003), their bread and butter remained party-based Euroscepticism. This leads at times to a decontextualized picture as well as to a partial picture. For example, while most authors argue that (particularly Soft) Euroscepticism is often at least in part strategic, i.e. influenced by party competition, they do not look into the ways pro-European positions are mainly a reflection of strategic choices (i.e. governmental ambitions).

The North Carolina School studies party positions on European integration in general. In fact, in the early studies the term Euroscepticism was not or almost never mentioned. In later studies the term became more central, and explicitly

¹⁶ Ray, ‘Measuring party orientation’, 4. To be fair, Ray puts the term experts in brackets in his text, seemingly indicating that the term is used relatively.

¹⁷ The North Carolina group has devoted considerable time to issues of reliability and validity of their dataset, including triangulating it with other dataset (such as the Comparative Manifesto Project). This is not the place to get into this debate, but interested readers are encouraged to look in particular at part 1 (European Integration) of the special symposium “Comparing Measures of Party Positioning: Expert, Manifesto, and Survey Data” in *Electoral Studies*, Vol.26, No.1, 2007; and Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Catherine De Vries, Erica Edwards, Marco Steenbergen and Milada Vachudov, ‘Reliability and validity of the 2002 and 2006 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys on party positioning’, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.49, 2010, 687-703.

¹⁸ Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (eds.), *EU Enlargement and Referendums*, London: Routledge, 2005.

operationalized through their seven-point scale (see 4.1), even if it remained just one of several studied positions. The North Carolina School also moved much further beyond party-based Euroscepticism than the Sussex School. Only a few of the articles in the two special issues are purely focused on party positions; most study (also) Euroscepticism at the mass level (i.e. as individual attitudes) and in the media (notably newspapers).

4.4. Explanations

The key debate in party-based studies is whether Euroscepticism is primarily explained by “ideological-programmatic or strategic-tactical party competition factors” (Szczurbiak & Taggart, *OE2*, 254). It is particularly within the North Carolina School that the importance of ‘ideology’ is stressed, through the so-called ‘cleavage theory’ of party positions on European integration. But while their “GAL-TAN dimension” might generate significant correlations in quantitative studies, it does not easily translate into the mainstream academic and non-academic debate about party ideologies. The main problem is that it is based upon fairly vague definitions (see 4.1), leading to rather broad and internally diverse camps of pro- and anti-European parties.

While the ideology thesis also finds support within the Sussex School, various authors stress the importance of strategy. Most notably, Nick Sitter and Agnes Batory (in *OE2*) provide a comparative study of agrarian parties in Europe to argue that party strategy explains Euroscepticism. More concretely, they argue:

“While values and historical predispositions remain an important element in explaining and predicting agrarian parties’ stance on European integration, Hard and Soft Euroscepticism is primarily a function of parties’ strategies in vote- and office-seeking” (p.74).

Although they come to this conclusion on the basis of a comparison of just one party family, the authors argue that “there is little reason to suspect that this is unique to agrarian parties” (p.75). However, a somewhat similar study of regionalist parties by Seth Jolly in *EUP*, using the North Carolina expert surveys, comes to a diametrically

opposed conclusion, namely that “regionalist political parties are consistently pro-EU across time, space, and issue area.”¹⁹

The problem with both studies is that the selected groups of parties are both problematic “party families.”²⁰ While the agrarian parties have a common origin, they do not (or no longer) share one core ideology. In fact, Sitter and Batory themselves acknowledge, for example, that the Swiss People’s Party (SVP) is “now often considered a populist right-wing party or a party encroaching on the territory of the extreme right” (p.57). Similarly, regionalist parties might share a critical position towards the central authority of their country, they differ not only in their final goal (from autonomy to independence) but also in their broader core ideologies (in fact, they can be found at the radical left, the radical right, and everywhere in between). Hence, in both cases the research design does not really allow for the controlling of the variable of ideology.

Some authors have tried to combine the two sets of explanations in an integrated model. For example, in line with our two-dimensional typology of party positions on European integration, Petr Kopecky and I have argued that ideology mainly determines a party’s diffuse support for European integration, dividing parties between Europhiles and Europhobes, while strategy comes primarily into play with regard to their specific support for European integration, dividing parties between those EU-optimists and EU-pessimists.

Szczerbiak and Taggart reflect upon all these positions in their concluding chapter of the second volume. Their opening bid seems to oppose the ideology thesis: “the European issue is a very slippery one, amenable to very different interpretations, and one cannot necessarily be easily read off from other party positions” (p.238). However, their main conclusion takes a very different turn on the debate:

Having reflected on this, we feel that much of this ‘ideology versus strategy’ debate has been cast in incorrect terms. Much of the

¹⁹ Seth Kincaid Jolly, ‘The Europhile fringe? Regionalist party support for European integration’, *European Union Politics*, Vol.8, No.1, 2007, 109-130 [109].

confusion here stems from the conflation (not least by ourselves on occasions) of ‘Euroscepticism’ as (a) a broad, underlying party position and (b) whether or not (and how) parties use the European issue (in this case in a contested way) as an element of inter-party competition (p.255).

While I agree with the need to distinguish between party position and issue contestation, their final argument that the underlying party positions on the European issue are determined by two factors, the party’s wider ideological profile and values and the perceived interest of its supporters, and that the relative importance of these two factors “is determined by the type of party in question and whether it is primarily amore ideological, value-based goal-seeking or a more pragmatic office-seeking party” (p.256), is largely tautological.

5. So What? The Question of Salience

Ever since Taggart’s foundational article “Touchstone of Dissent” salience has been the Achilles heel of Euroscepticism studies. Almost every case study in the first volume of *Opposing Europe?*, whether they found (hard or soft) Euroscepticism at the party level or not, concludes that “the relevance of the European issue in [name of country] is extremely low” (p.91). In fact, in the few cases that Euroscepticism is actually relevant, it is mainly at the party level, not at the mass level. The few exceptions are often countries where referendums are held about the European issue; in which case the party dynamics often change fundamentally.

Szczerbiak and Taggart take up the issue of salience in the extremely self-critical concluding chapter of volume 2. They conclude that “while vote share gives a crude indication of a (Eurosceptic) party’s significance within its party system, it is not possible to ‘measure’ levels of party-based Euroscepticism in a particular country (or, indeed, comparatively) by aggregating vote shares” (p.259). This statement needs to be qualified, however. It is correct that the vote share of Eurosceptic parties cannot be used as an indicator for the importance of Euroscepticism at the mass-level. However,

²⁰ Peter Mair and Cas Mudde, ‘The party family and its study’, *Annual Review of Political Science*,

particularly if calculated on the basis of percentages of parliamentary seats, support for Eurosceptic parties *can* be a measure of party-based Euroscepticism in a country and this measure *can* be used comparatively.

They further suggest that salience of the European issue is a multifaceted concept that relates to, at least, three aspects: “first, the extent to which parties use the issue in inter-party competition (...); secondly, more generally how much it features in the public debate of political issues; and, thirdly, how much weight citizens attach to it when determining their voting behaviour” (p.253). Particularly for studies of party-based Euroscepticism, I would add to that a fourth aspect: the ways in which the European issue relates to the core ideology of the party. For example, for nationalist and socialist parties one of the two foundational aspects of European integration, i.e. pooled national sovereignty and an integrated market economy, directly opposes the core of their ideology.

The North Carolina School has little discussion on the question of salience, which it considers to be dealt with by the expert survey question on “the relative importance of this issue in the *party’s public stance*.” The main exception is an article by Catherine Netjes and Harmen Binnema, who compare the salience of the European integration issue across three data sets (the CMP, the European Election Study, and the UNC expert survey) and find that “one common dimension underlies the different salience measures.”²¹ The problem is that this tests the reliability of the measure, rather than the validity.

The measure used in the UNC expert survey is highly problematic. First of all, the terminology is vague and will undoubtedly be interpreted very differently between countries and among “experts.” Second, as many chapters in both *OE* volumes have shown, “Euro-contestation,” i.e. the party’s public stance on European integration, is not the same as the party’s position on the issue. In fact, Szczerbiak and Taggart argue that “broad, underlying party positions on Europe need to be distinguished from

Vol.1, 1998, 211-229.

²¹ Catherine E. Netjes and Harmen A. Binnema, “The salience of the European integration issue: three data sets compared”, *Electoral Studies*, Vol.26, 2007, 399-49 [39].

whether (and how) parties use the issue in inter-party competition and that these phenomena are driven by different causal mechanisms” (p.259).

6. Toward a More Integrated Approach

While the two Schools do not completely ignore each other, it is still amazing how little cross-fertilization there is between the two dominant groups of scholars of Euroscepticism. Undoubtedly this is, in part, a consequence of methodological differences (as well, perhaps, of more fundamental epistemological and ontological differences). And while both are also partly doing different work, there is considerable room for (further) integration.

The main strength of the Sussex School is validity, i.e. depth, detail, and expertise. EPERN is made up of scholars who specialize in Euroscepticism in a specific country, which they know through and through. Moreover, they employ a more precise typology of party positions – which does need some revision. The main weakness so far is reliability, which can however be improved by providing clearer definitions and more explicitly stating the sources on the basis of which party positions should be analyzed.

In almost complete opposition, the main strength of the North Carolina School is reliability, most notably cross-temporal; cross-national reliability is somewhat hampered by conceptual confusion. Moreover, their dataset is easily available and easily combinable with other cross-national and cross-temporal quantitative datasets, like the Eurobarometer. Hence, it is particularly well suited to uncover correlations between Euroscepticism and other party variables (cross-nationally), trends in party positions, and connections between party positions and mass attitudes. The main weakness is the lack of detail and depth, which makes it difficult to say much about causality or the *why* question.

The obvious solution is to combine the two Schools in a mixed-methods approach, i.e. a “nested analysis,”²² which will play to the strengths of both. For example, in a first step, the North Carolina School can point at a possible explanation of party positions on European integration (by finding a significant relationship between two variables, say ‘government participation’ and ‘position on European integration’). In a second step case studies from the Sussex School can be used for process tracing, i.e. to find out why government participation leads to a certain party position on European integration, on the basis of which the mere correlation can be developed into a full-fledge theory. Alternatively, in the first step the North Carolina data can uncover a cross-temporal development (e.g. increased party-based Euroscepticism) and test some possible explanations (e.g. increased mass-based Euroscepticism). In the second step, different case study strategies can be employed to establish how mass-level Euroscepticism translates into party-based Euroscepticism (“pathway case”) as well as to explain why in some cases it doesn’t translate (“deviant case”).²³

7. Into a (Soft) Eurosceptic Future

It will be years before we know the full consequences of the ongoing economic crisis in Europe, but there is no doubt that it has brought European integration (back) to the top of the political and, now also public, agenda. For many ‘ordinary Europeans’ the European Union has finally moved from foreign policy to domestic politics, and from a low salience to at least a medium salience issue. While this will affect all positions on European integration, first indications are that Euroscepticism is growing, but that the reasons for it are becoming more and more diverse.

If one would apply the original definitions of Hard and Soft Euroscepticism to today’s European political parties, few would not qualify. From Turkish membership to the Greek ‘bailouts,’ frustrated criticism and even outright opposition are developing in the most unexpected corners of Europe. Even the traditional backbones of the European project, the Christian democratic and social democratic parties, are no

²² Evan S. Lieberman, ‘Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research’, *American Political Science Review*, Vol.99, No.3, 3005, 435-452.

²³ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 89-90.

longer immune to “qualified opposition” (or at least specific criticism). This provides a whole new challenge to the field: ensuring that Euroscepticism does not again become “a generic, catch-all term encapsulating a disparate bundle of attitudes opposed to European integration in general and opposition to the EU in particular” (Szczerbiak & Taggart, *OE2*, p.240).

Whereas salience remains the Achilles heel of Euroscepticism studies, increasingly conceptual clarity will become a major issue of concern too. While virtually any critique of European integration could be classified as (Soft) Euroscepticism until the mid-1990s, without the group of Eurosceptic parties becoming too large and meaningless – not unlike the category of anti-immigration parties – in the future we might all be Eurosceptics in one way or another. This will require a finer conceptual framework, which distinguishes between different types of opposition (and support) of the European project, but also between ideological and policy positions.

With most European countries now in the European Union, which itself is much more defined than (at least) before the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, political parties’ ‘ideological’ positions on European integration are increasingly irrelevant to European politics. What does it truly matter that many populist radical right parties support a “Europe of the Nations” or conservative parties only a “common market,” when most debates on European integration have nothing to do with these issues? What are the consequences of assuming that many parties do not hold a well-developed ideological position on European integration, but instead develop their positions in a rather ad hoc manner? Based on the country studies of *OEI*, it seems that most political parties, at least in the postcommunist accession states, took a rather “Europragmatic” approach to European integration. Assessing each individual issue from a similar ideological-strategic position, they developed fairly consistent and predictable policy positions, even if they did not always relate to the same European utopia.

In conclusion, there is little doubt that the future will see an increase in the occurrence and salience of (party-based) Euroscepticism. Moreover, with the ever developing European Union, encroaching on more and more issues of traditionally domestic politics, Euroscepticism will become even more diverse. This will require not just a

more qualified typology and measurement model, but also a better use of our limited resources. To fully understand the highly complex political phenomenon of Euroscepticism, a mixed-methods approach combining insights from both the North Carolina and Sussex School provides the most promising avenue for future research.

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