UNDERSTANDING EUROSCEPTICISM

Cécile Leconte

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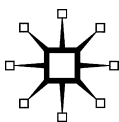Steven McGuire and Michael Smith **The European Union and the United States**

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Understanding Euroscepticism

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List of Abbreviations

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ATTAC	Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Civic Action
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCEB	Candidate Countries Eurobarometer
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union
CEC	Conference of European Churches
CEO	Corporate Europe Observatory
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COMECE	Commission of the Bishops' Conference of the European Community
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union
EAW	European Arrest Warrant
EB	Eurobarometer
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
EC	European Community
ECB	European Central Bank
ECE	Eastern and Central European (countries)
ECHR	European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defence Community
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFDG	Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EPP-ED	European People's Party-European Democrats

ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
FEB	Flash Eurobarometer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GUE–NGL	Group of the United European Left/Nordic Green Left
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
IND–DEM	Independence and Democracy Group
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MNP	Member of National Parliament
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
QMV	Qualified Majority Voting
SEA	Single European Act
SEB	Special Eurobarometer
SPD	Sozial-demokratische Partei Deutschlunds
TEC	Treaty Establishing the European Community
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UEN	Union for a Europe of Nations
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

To anti-Europeans' regret, Henry Kissinger's prediction that the disappearance of the Soviet threat and Germany's reunification would bring about the end of European integration (1996:749) proved wrong. EU institutions' and German political elites' commitment to European integration proved much more robust than realist theorists like Kissinger thought. However, twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the political context in which European integration is proceeding has changed considerably. A telling indication of this was incidentally provided by the much-awaited ruling of the German Constitutional Court, delivered in June 2009, in which it declared that the Lisbon Treaty was compatible with German Basic Law. While this ruling was hailed in the rest of the EU as paving the way for a swift ratification of the treaty in Germany, it triggered some strongly critical remarks in the country itself. Former foreign minister Joseph Fischer, for instance, qualified it as 'Eurosceptic' and 'backwards-oriented' (2009). In fact, much of the Court's ruling is permeated by an unusually distrustful tone towards the Union, reminiscent of British Eurosceptics' hostility towards a European 'super-state'. In this ruling, the Court explicitly considered, for the first time, the possibility of Germany's withdrawal from the EU, if the EU were to develop into a federal state without reaching a corresponding level of democratic legitimacy (BVerfGE 2009:s.264). This illustrated the extent of the change in mood towards European integration that occurred in Germany and in many other EU countries during the 1990s and early 2000s. In this respect, recent developments in EU politics over the last few years have confirmed the significance of Euroscepticism and how the latter affects the different dimensions of European integration.

For a start, the EU's institutional reform, which aims at improving the EU's decision-making capacity and enhancing its coherence as an international actor, has been rejected by voters on several occasions, notably in the Dutch and French referenda on the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and in the first Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in 2008.

A second aspect has been the impact that Euroscepticism has had

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in recent years on all the major EU institutions. In the first half of 2009, the Czech presidency of the Council was almost derailed by Eurosceptic forces in the main ruling party and by parochial domestic rivalries, which brought about the fall of the incumbent government. In the 2009 European elections, strongly Eurosceptic parties attracted large sections of the electorate in some countries: roughly a third of voters in Austria and the Netherlands, a quarter in the UK (without including the Tories) and a fifth in France. Above all, turnout reached a historic low (43 per cent), which was interpreted as either indifference or hostility towards the EU among large numbers of voters. This seemed to affect the representativeness of the European Parliament (EP), precisely at a time when the German Constitutional Court, as discussed above, was questioning the ability of this institution to adequately represent voters (BVerfGE 2009:s.279). As far as the European Court of Justice (ECJ) was concerned, it attracted intense criticism in 2008. Following several of its rulings involving internal market legislation, the ECJ was criticized by trade unions across the EU for undermining workers' and unions' rights. Furthermore, the authority of the ECJ was clearly contested in the German Constitutional Court's Lisbon ruling (see p.160). As regards the European Commission, the aftermath of the 2005 and 2008 referenda illustrated its difficulties in promoting the Union's general interest, in a context where any controversial proposal might fan Euroscepticism in the member states.

Furthermore, the two biggest achievements of the EU, the completion of the internal market and the eastern enlargement, have triggered backlash reactions in the last couple of years, which have been exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis that broke out in late 2008. The internal market, a core pillar of the EU, was threatened by protectionist tendencies, notably in France and the UK. While state aid to the automobile sector was made conditional upon the preservation of French jobs, British workers were demonstrating against the temporary transfer of Italian workers to plants in the UK. In parallel, surveys have highlighted the mixed feelings of public opinion towards the latest enlargements. While a large majority of citizens welcomed the resulting increased mobility within the enlarged EU, 56 per cent thought that enlargement had contributed to job losses in their country, and 50 per cent thought it had increased feelings of insecurity (FEB 257:23). Besides, xenophobic reactions against Romanian residents in Italy (in 2008) and Ireland (in 2009) have endangered the principle of the free movement of

persons in the EU. These reactions were reminiscent of French concerns over a potential 'invasion' of Polish service providers (the notorious 'Polish plumber') during the 2005 referendum campaign on the EU Constitutional Treaty.

Finally, the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the evolution of public support for continued integration is uncertain. For the time being, no uniform pattern has emerged. While the crisis seems to boost pro-European support in Sweden (to join the Eurozone) and in Iceland (for EU accession), public opinion in the UK seems to be evolving in an opposite direction. In the past, support for EC/EU membership declined after the two oil shocks of the 1970s and the economic recession of the early 1990s; today, there is uncertainty about the impact of prolonged economic recession on the evolution of support.

These different examples show that Euroscepticism is a generic and encompassing term, which applies to a large variety of actors and discourses.

Origins and definitions of the term

Euroscepticism is a rather recent term. It was not used during the first decades of European integration, when opponents of integration were referred to as nationalists, 'anti-marketeers' (for opponents to the common market in the UK) or simply as communists, Gaullists, etc. However, some of the core concepts of Eurosceptic discourse already existed, such as 'Eurocrat' – a term which appeared in French dictionaries in the mid-1960s (during the de Gaulle era) and which conveys the idea of a gap between European elites and the average citizen. Euroscepticism is a term that originated in a specific context, that of British public debate on the EC in the mid-1980s. First published in an article in *The Times* in 1985 (Harmsen and Spiering 2004), as the completion of the common market was about to become the top priority on the EC's agenda, it initially referred to the 'anti-marketeers', who at that time comprised most of the Labour party and a fringe of the Conservatives. It was popularized later by Margaret Thatcher's so-called 'Bruges speech', given in 1988 at the College of Europe. In this speech, which was to become a 'key building block in the development of British opposition to the European Union' (Usherwood 2004:5), Thatcher outlined the core tenets of her vision of the future of the EC. From the early 1990s on, as domestic debates on the EU

became increasingly polarized in the context of the Maastricht Treaty's ratification process, the term Euroscepticism expanded to continental Europe, where it became a 'catch-all' synonym for any form of opposition or reluctance towards the EU.

This reminder of the origin of the term highlights the first difficulty encountered when trying to define Euroscepticism: to what extent does it refer to a specifically British phenomenon? As explained later in the book, Euroscepticism has a specific meaning in the British context, where it refers to a form of cultural anti-Europeanism broader than 'EU-scepticism' (Harmsen and Spiering 2004). In fact, the meaning of Euroscepticism varies according to country context. While it always refers to some form of hostility towards the EU, this hostility does not necessarily apply to the same dimensions of European integration. For instance, Euroscepticism in Austria is driven, to a large extent, by negative perceptions of EU enlargement and opposition to Turkey's EU accession. In the UK, this dimension of Euroscepticism is not significant, as most Eurosceptic discourses express hostility towards a 'European super-state' and to Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Similarly, Swedish public opinion displays a rather positive evaluation of the latest EU enlargements, compared with other older member states (FEB 257: 32–5), while being more reluctant towards political integration, notably in the field of foreign policy.

Second, the meaning of Euroscepticism also varies across time, as it evolves in parallel to the successive developments of the EU. Opposition to European integration in 1957 mainly implied opposition to the setting up of the common market; by contrast, opposition to the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 amounted to hostility towards political integration (as embodied, for instance, by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)). In this respect, the notion of 'revisionists' can be used to refer to those Eurosceptics who oppose European integration as it evolved after the Maastricht Treaty (Flood and Usherwood 2007:6).

Third, Euroscepticism is a very plastic notion that originated in media discourse; like populism, it is compatible with any ideological position, from the extreme left to the extreme right. It is not an ideology: it does not express a single, stable set of ideas, putting forward a comprehensive worldview. Like populism, it also has a normative dimension, as it is often used in inter-party competition to disparage political competitors. Indeed, it is quite telling that even well-known Eurosceptics, such as Czech President Vaclav Klaus, do

not label themselves 'Eurosceptics' but rather 'Euro-critics' or 'Eurorealists' (as in the 2001 *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* presented by the Czech Civic Union (ODS), of which Klaus is a former leader). In this respect, the flurry of terms that have emerged in order to refer to different forms of Euroscepticism (Eurorejects, Europragmatists, Eurorealists, etc.) does not contribute to a clear understanding of the phenomenon.

Perhaps a useful starting point is the literal meaning of the term 'scepticism'. Historically, scepticism is a philosophy that developed in ancient Greece in the fourth century BC. Initially outlined by Pyrrhon, scepticism is a mindset: sceptics do not accept the validity of any belief or opinion *a priori*, without submitting it to a free and critical examination. The sceptic abstains from judgments and advocates distancing oneself from one's own opinions and beliefs. Scepticism developed in opposition to any form of dogma or theoretical thinking, to which sceptics opposed practical experience and common sense. In this respect, scepticism is a safeguard against intolerance and against the possible subversion of idealism into fanaticism. However, this mindset has its downsides. Indeed, sceptics have been accused of discrediting any form of universal truth or ethics, as their reliance on practical common sense has led them to emphasize the respect of local norms and traditions. The insistence of sceptics on respect for diversity against uniformity may lead to a form of moral relativism and conservatism.

If one retains this definition, Euroscepticism does not necessarily mean hostility towards European integration. Literally, Eurosceptics are those who submit the issue of European integration to a sceptical examination: support for European integration should not derive from any theoretical or normative belief (for instance, the belief that an ever closer union between the peoples of Europe is necessarily a good thing) but must be assessed on the basis of practical cost/gains analysis and according to its respect of national (political, cultural, normative) diversities. In this sense, the Eurosceptic opposes, to the 'dogma' of an ever closer union, a pragmatic stance, evaluating European integration on its merits.

However, in today's political and academic discourse, Euroscepticism has come to be equated with different forms of opposition to European integration. A seminal early definition proposed by Paul Taggart, and initially applied to Euroscepticism among political parties, equated Euroscepticism with 'contingent and conditional opposition to European integration as well as total

and unconditional opposition to it' (1998:364). This initial definition, which covered a broad range of attitudes towards the EU, was later broken down into two different forms of opposition by Taggart and Szczerbiak. Whereas 'hard Euroscepticism' refers to 'principled opposition to the EU and European integration' (as it is being articulated by those parties or actors advocating a withdrawal from the EU or opposing EU accession), 'soft Euroscepticism' expresses a 'qualified opposition' to the EU, reflecting dissatisfaction with EU policies or with the current EU trajectory perceived to be contrary to the national interest (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002). Other typologies have been put forward, outlining different degrees of opposition to European integration, such as Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) distinction between Euroscepticism (expressing principled support for membership but dissatisfaction with the EU's current development) and Europhobia (expressing principled opposition and dissatisfaction), or Flood and Usherwood's six-point continuum of party positions, ranging from simple rejection of the EU to a maximalist position advocating a federal Europe (2007:6).

Before turning to the definition retained in this book, it is important to clarify, in Taggart and Szczerbiak's words, 'what Euroscepticism is not' (2003:12).The first question addressed by the two authors relates to dissatisfaction with one or several EU policies: can this be equated with Euroscepticism? To answer this question, they put forward a distinction between 'core' and 'peripheral' EU policies. For instance, while opposition to EMU or to major EU treaties can be equated with Euroscepticism, opposition to less central policies, such as the CFSP or the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), cannot. However, as the authors point out, the categorization of policies as core or peripheral depends on subjective perceptions. For instance, dissatisfaction with the CFP is widespread in the UK, while being a non-issue in other countries. Similarly, among French political elites, the CFSP is a core component of the traditional French understanding of the EU as a relevant power in international relations (the *Europe-puissance* concept). In a similar vein, as the authors point out, opposition to EU enlargement does not necessarily correlate with Eurosceptic orientations. While Euro-enthusiasts may oppose enlargement as a process that could dilute the EU and prevent institutional deepening, Eurosceptics may support it precisely for the same reasons. However, this is, again, a question of context and type of actor. While opposition to enlargement tends to be correlated with a more principled opposition to

further integration among national MPs (MNPs), it tends to be asso-
ciated with pro-European positions (in the sense of institutional
deepening) among Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)
(Katz 2002:19). Consequently, in order to assess whether opposi-
tion to specific EU policies is an expression of a broader type of
Euroscepticism, one has to analyze the actors' positions within their
specific context.

The second question to be addressed is whether criticizing the EU
'for being insufficiently integrationist and/or undemocratic' is a
form of Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2003:15). As the
two authors rightly point out, criticizing the EU for not being supra-
national or democratic enough cannot simply be equated with
Euroscepticism. Indeed, to advocates of a federal Europe, the insti-
tutions of the European Economic Community (EEC) were not
supranational enough and the European Commmunities, centred
mainly on economic goals, did not live up to the plans of a political
union. Eugen Kogon, a former anti-fascist and European federalist,
expressed this disillusionment with the EEC when he wrote, in
1957, that the Rome treaties had little to do with the political unifi-
cation of Europe (quoted in Loth 1989:602). More than thirty years
later, federalist hopes were dashed again as the Maastricht Treaty
set up the EU on the basis of a pillar structure, with reduced powers
for supranational institutions in the second and third pillars. As a
result, some advocates of a federal Europe, such as the Belgian
Green Party, voted against the Maastricht Treaty (Taggart and
Szczerbiak 2003:15, note 28). Similarly, one can criticize the EU for
being insufficiently democratic because it is under-developed as a
union of citizens. Typically, pro-Europeans who articulate this type
of criticism call, for instance, for an extension of the powers of the
EP as a way to democratize the EU. Such was the case for the British
political scientist and former MEP David Marquand, author of the
famous notion of the 'democratic deficit' (see Marquand 1979).
Indeed, an intra-systemic criticism, what Flood and Usherwood call
the 'reformist position' (2007:6), does not necessarily equate to
Euroscepticism. What counts is how actors argue their position and
which options they put forward in order to palliate the EU's short-
comings. Again, the issue of context is of crucial importance here.
For instance, the notion of subsidiarity (which is now put forward
as the panacea for the EU's alleged democratic shortcomings) does
not have the same meaning in the 1984 Spinelli project for a
European constitution, where it was a cornerstone of federal

Europe, as it does in the 2009 programme of the Bavarian Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU), where it is a code word for the repatriation of EU powers to states or regions. In a similar vein, references to 'freedom' in the British debate on the EU often denote a Eurosceptic position, as it stands for national independence against Brussels' authority.

Keeping these clarifications in mind, in the remainder of the book we will use the term 'hard Eurosceptic' (or 'anti-European') for those parties or actors who oppose EU membership as a principle. In contrast the generic term 'Eurosceptic' will be used for that broader range of groupings or individuals who accept the reality of EU membership, while expressing hostility or deep reluctance towards the 'basic political arrangements' (Easton 1975:437) underlying the EU political system, which they do not consider as fully legitimate, such as: the pooling of sovereignty; the delegation of state powers to supranational institutions; the primacy of EU law over national norms (including constitutions); and the underlying telos of an 'ever closer union' (as the first objective of the European Economic Community (EEC), mentioned in the preamble of the Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC)). Moreover, what Eurosceptic discourses often have in common is a non-acceptance of the *sui generis* character of the EU as a union 'of states *and* citizens' (which distinguishes the EU from interstate international organizations). Those who conceive of EU citizenship and a (hypothetical) post-national democracy as consubstantially illegitimate might be qualified as Eurosceptic. Finally, we qualify as Eurosceptic those parties (essentially from the radical right or radical left) who do not explicitly oppose EU membership, while nevertheless questioning, to varying degrees, the core values on which the Union is based (for instance, market economy, free competition and non-discrimination).

Objectives and thesis of the book

This book aims at providing the reader with an understanding of the dynamics underlying opposition to European integration. By doing so, it pursues a twofold objective. First, there is a need to clarify current debates on Euroscepticism and to debunk widespread, misleading and often normative assumptions about this phenomenon. Current developments in European integration have attracted a lot of political and media attention on Euroscepticism, often leading

to the diffusion of mistaken or un-nuanced views on the issue. Examples include the commonly held assumptions that there has been a general decline in public support for European integration since Maastricht, that Eurosceptics are necessarily 'losers' of the Europeanization and globalization processes, or that voters are more Eurosceptic than political elites. Thus, the book also aims at providing answers to simple questions, such as: Do latest EU referenda and declining turnout at European elections express voters' views on the EU or do they mainly express protest against governments? How can cross-country differences in levels of Euroscepticism be explained? Why are women more Eurosceptic than men? And so on.

Secondly, the study of Euroscepticism has generated a vast and rapidly expanding library of materials from such disciplines as political science, political sociology, history, media and communication studies, cultural studies, and translation studies, to name a few. This diversity of perspectives on Euroscepticism has shed light on the different facets of Euroscepticism. This book aims to be the first attempt to bring together and connect these different perspectives, in order to offer a comprehensive analysis of Euroscepticism, as it is being articulated by a variety of actors (political parties and voters, the media, national institutions, civil society organizations, etc.).

In this respect, I argue that Euroscepticism is too often viewed either as a marginal phenomenon articulated by non-mainstream actors (such as protest-based parties or the tabloid press) or as an irrational behaviour on the part of ignorant voters, who 'vote against Europe' in order to sanction national governments. Consequently, it is often analyzed exclusively as the expression of an 'elite/public' divide. By contrast, this book argues that public Euroscepticism is embedded in a much wider context, in which mainstream political elites, national institutions and domestic mass media act as filters of collective perceptions of 'Europe'. Indeed, successive chapters highlight the mainstream dimension of Euroscepticism, as it is articulated by government parties' leaderships, the quality press, and other entities.

Moreover, it argues that students of Euroscepticism must widen their perspective across time and space. From a chronological point of view, collective perceptions of the EU are influenced by different temporalities: that of accession processes but also countries' relationships with 'Europe' in the course of history. From a spatial point of view, perceptions of the EU are influenced not only by national

filters, but also by regional factors and global trends. Like the EU itself, Euroscepticism must thus be understood from a multi-level perspective. In that respect, it can be analyzed as a symptom of the broader societal changes and adaptational pressures which confront European societies.

Organization of the book

Why study Euroscepticism at all? The chapter that follows explains that, far from being a marginal phenomenon, Euroscepticism has a concrete impact on the process of European integration – on day-to-day decision-making as well as on successive institutional reforms. It also highlights a consequence of Euroscepticism that is seldom taken into account: its impact on the EU's standing in international relations and on how it is perceived by third countries' actors. Ultimately, it is argued, the nature of the EU and how it will develop will be determined by the extent to which governments take Eurosceptic positions or stick to their official commitment in favour of further integration.

The two following chapters underline the multi-faceted nature of Euroscepticism. Chapter 2 highlights the different varieties of Euroscepticism, by breaking it up into its different dimensions and by showing how they have evolved over time. Chapter 3 explains cross-country variations in levels and meanings of Euroscepticism, as well as regional differences within countries as far as perceptions of European integration are concerned.

The following chapters focus on different categories of actors. Chapters 4 and 5 emphasize the elite dimension of Euroscepticism. Chapter 4 analyzes Euroscepticism among domestic political elites, by focusing especially on mainstream political parties. It highlights the ambiguity of political elites' initial commitment to European integration, shows how they have reacted to the phenomenon of Euroscepticism from the 1990s on, and explains how their stance on the EU is evolving as a consequence. Chapter 5 addresses Euroscepticism from the point of view of those national institutions that are in charge of the implementation and enforcement of EU law. It sheds light on more subtle forms of Euroscepticism, as national institutions use their position as gatekeepers in the implementation of EU law to resist some of the changes implied by Europeanization.

The three following chapters focus on public opinion, the media and civil society. Chapter 6 analyzes the dynamics of popular or

public Euroscepticism, as it is expressed in opinion surveys, EP elections and EU-related referenda. Chapter 7 centres on one category of public opinion makers: domestic media. By expanding the study of media Euroscepticism beyond the case of the tabloid press, it shows how the quality press can contribute to diffusing softer forms of Euroscepticism, while new media play an increasing role in patterns of opinion formation on EU issues. Chapter 8 focuses on civil society actors. It explains why traditional organizations hitherto strongly supportive of European integration, like churches and trade unions, might be becoming more sceptical towards the current trajectory of the EU. It also addresses social mobilization and grassroots organizations, like those of the alter-globalization movement, and analyzes whether their criticism of the EU can be equated with Euroscepticism.

Chapter 9 introduces a theoretical perspective by assessing, on the basis of the book's main findings, how relevant different theories can be in explaining Euroscepticism. By relying on classical theories of support for political regimes, it aims to clarify the nature of prevalent support for the EU amongst public opinion. It also evaluates the respective relevance of rational-choice versus constructivist approaches in explaining the underlying logic of Euroscepticism. Finally, it assesses to what extent the study of Euroscepticism can improve our understanding of other forms of opposition to global trade liberalization and international governance. Finally, Chapter 10 introduces a prospective perspective, by considering how Euroscepticism might evolve in the years to come and how the EU might respond to this challenge.

Why Euroscepticism Matters

When Margaret Thatcher made her famous speech to the College of Europe in Bruges on 22 September 1988 it was seen as a radical manifesto and a defining cornerstone of Eurosceptic discourse. But if we compare her denunciation of the EU's alleged regulation excesses

> The Community is not an end in itself … [It] is a practical means by which Europe can ensure the prosperity … of its people … [Working more closely together] does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy … [We do not want] a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels … Our aim should not be more and more detailed regulation from the centre. (Thatcher 1988)

with the text of the European Council's Laeken declaration of 15 December 2001 on the future of the European Union,

> [C]itizens also feel that the Union is behaving too bureaucratically … What citizens understand by 'good governance' is opening up fresh opportunities, not imposing further red tape. What they expect is … better responses to practical issues and not a European super-state or European institutions inveigling their way into every nook and cranny of life. (European Council 2001)

these two quotations sound surprisingly similar. What was considered a Eurosceptic discourse in the Thatcher era has now become common parlance in relation to the EU. Indeed, as this chapter will show, Eurosceptics have played a significant role in the integration process as agenda-setters and 'entrepreneurs of contentious issues' (Usherwood 2004:14). As such, they have influenced, in part, the terms of the debate on European integration and the definition of the EU's agenda.

It is argued here that Euroscepticism matters for three main reasons. First, the EC was founded as a compromise between different, even competing views as to its nature and its finalities. Today, the issue of the debate is whether the Union will further develop into a supranational, political community or 'spill back' towards more traditional forms of interstate cooperation. At stake is thus the endurance of a unique system of multinational governance and pooled sovereignty between states. Second, the debate between Eurosceptics and advocates of political unification has implications for global governance. Indeed, if the EU were to be reduced to a mere free trade area, as many Eurosceptics in and outside the EU wish, it is unlikely that the agenda for a more regulated trade liberalization would be supported by other major players on the world stage. Third, Euroscepticism can be analyzed as one of the symptoms of the transformation of democracy in a globalizing world. Not only did Eurosceptics raise the key question of legitimacy at the EU level, thus playing a crucial role in the development of a more democratic EU, public Euroscepticism as a sociological phenomenon also sheds light on the challenging impact of market integration on national democracy and on the relationship between state and society.

The chapter begins by explaining how Eurosceptics in national governments can exert an influence on EU-level decision-making and argues that specific features of the EU institutional system tend to compound this influence. In a second section, the chapter analyzes how Euroscepticism influenced the evolution of EU governance and changes in the balance of power between EU institutions, in a context where there is no clear support for supranational solutions among governments. A third section assesses the impact of Euroscepticism on the EU's external relations and on how it is perceived by third country actors, showing how competing views on the future of the EU interact with a more global debate on the future of global governance. The chapter concludes, in the fourth section, by analyzing Euroscepticism as a welcome thorn in the EU's side, as it prompts the EU to confront not only its own democratic deficit, but also how this deficit affects democratic governance at the domestic level.

Eurosceptics: channels of influence in the EU

Although Eurosceptic parties' electoral weight is significant, their influence on decisions affecting the EU is mainly indirect, as it is

channelled through national governments. In this respect, some of the institutional features of the EU allow for a disproportionate influence of Eurosceptic orientations on the integration process, not only in day-to-day decision-making, but also in 'history-making decisions' (following Peterson and Bromberg's typology (1999:10)) that determine the shape of the EU and the direction of the integration process. Moreover, the impact of Euroscepticism on the integration process is compounded by the more frequent use of referenda (as opposed to parliamentary ratification) in order to settle debated EU issues (at least in the case of EMU and the EU Constitutional Treaty).

A limited influence in the EU's institutional triangle

On average, Eurosceptic parties, be they of the hard or the soft sort, appeal to roughly one-fifth of the EU's electorate. While electoral support for hard Eurosceptic parties in national elections remains very limited, with 4 to 5 per cent of the vote, the mean electoral score for Eurosceptic parties (both soft and hard) oscillates between 15 and 20 per cent (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002:16–24; Ray 2007:165). This corresponds roughly to the proportion of Eurosceptic representatives in the EP (see pp.130–1). This significant electoral weight, however, does not translate into direct influence on EU-level decision-making within the EU's institutional triangle (the Parliament, Commission and Council).

Regarding the EP, the overwhelming majority of overtly Eurosceptic MEPs are confined to small Eurosceptic groups. This small influence is further reduced by their limited ability to engage in party networking at the EU level, as there are no Eurosceptic transnational party federations. Furthermore, the most Eurosceptic groups in the EP are characterized by low levels of internal cohesion. For example, the overall cohesion rate of the Independence and Democracy (IND-DEM) group between 2004 and 2009 was only 47 per cent (compared with 91 per cent for the pro-European Greens) (Votewatch.eu 2009). Besides, the most Eurosceptic groups are rarely part of a winning majority during EP votes. Between 2004 and 2009, for instance, the radical left-wing GUE-NGL (United European Left-Nordic Green Left) and the radical right-wing IND-DEM were part of a winning majority in 52 per cent and 46 per cent of cases respectively, compared with 86 per cent for the main group European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED) (Votewatch.eu 2009).

As far as the European Commission is concerned, Eurosceptics have a limited influence on the formation of the College of Commissioners. Since Commissioners are appointed on the basis of a list of candidates pre-selected by national governments, in agreement with the Commission's President, there is little probability that a strongly Eurosceptic candidate might end up in the College. Besides, the fact that the EP now organizes hearings for individual commissioners, in order to test their competences and overall commitment to their future portfolio, might act as a filter, preventing controversial and/or overtly Eurosceptic candidates from accessing the College. Certainly, not all Commissioners are Euro-enthusiasts. The case of Frits Bolkestein, whose nomination as Dutch Commissioner in 1999 triggered a controversy in the Netherlands over his allegedly Eurosceptic position (Harmsen 2004:108), illustrates this. More fundamentally, governments have sometimes prevented the nomination of strongly Europhile politicians from accessing the Commission's presidency, as John Major did with Jean-Luc Dehaene in 1994 and Tony Blair with Guy Verhofstadt in 2004.

Concerning the Council, any direct influence of hard or strongly Eurosceptic elements is limited by two factors. First, being mostly protest-based parties, strongly Eurosceptic parties in the EU are rarely represented in governments. Second, most of the Council's work is prepared by COREPER-level ambassadors and by the Council's working groups and thus remains relatively immune to the turmoil of domestic politics. Despite being a diplomatic organ, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) is permeated by a strong culture of compromise. Member states' representatives share a commitment to ensuring the performance and smooth functioning of the Council, which influences the defence of national interests (Lewis 1998). Similarly, the Council's working groups, composed of national civil servants, have developed specific transnational communication networks which do not rely on a narrow definition of national interests (Beyers and Dierickx 1998).

In this context, Eurosceptics' main channels of influence in the EU are national governments. First, there might be Eurosceptic factions among mainstream incumbent parties (as in the case of the British Labour and Conservative parties, the Italian Forza Italia, etc.). Second, coalition governments may include Eurosceptic coalition partners (examples include the Communist party in French governments and the extreme right parties Lega Nord and

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in the Italian and Austrian governments). Third, governing parties might be tempted to toughen their stance in the Council in order to confront a strong Eurosceptic opposition in domestic politics (as the British Labour party did during negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty in 2007). Consequently, institutional devices giving single governments a disproportionate influence in decision-making are likely to compound Eurosceptics' impact on the integration process. Three such devices are examined below: the rotating EU presidency, voting systems in the Council and provisions on treaty reform.

The rotating Council presidency: a platform for Eurosceptic governments?

The rotating presidency of the Council can certainly provide Europhile governments with a good opportunity to attempt to further integration (as was the case in the Dutch presidency during the Maastricht Treaty negotiations, for example). Moreover, national presidencies can boost the popularity of the EU in the country that holds the presidency, as has been argued elsewhere (Semetko *et al*. 2003). However, the rotating presidency (which is maintained by the Lisbon Treaty, except for the European Council and the External Relations Council) can also be a serious challenge for the EU.

Indeed, it endows a single government, for a six-month period, with the responsibility of managing the daily business of the EU, of acting as a broker between all the actors involved, of displaying leadership skills and of representing the EU on the world stage (see Schout and Vanhoonacker 2006). Consequently, domestic governments face a difficult task. They still represent national interests at the EU level, but, at the same time, their presidential role requires the ability to rise above the fray and avoid an overly parochial, narrow-minded defence of one's preferences, especially in times of crisis or when crucial decisions are on the agenda. This is the case, for instance, during Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs), when amendments to existing treaties are negotiated.

Certainly, several factors limit the room for manoeuvre of any government holding the presidency. First, the presidency's ability to influence the EU's agenda is limited, at least in the first pillar of the EU, by the Commission's monopoly on legislative initiative. Moreover, member states have unequal resources (in terms of EU

expertise, staff, etc.) enabling them to influence the EU's agenda according to their preferences (Hix 2005:81). Second, peer pressure and the wish to have a 'successful' presidency might deter them from taking initiatives that could harm their own country's reputation. Third, other actors, such as the Council's General Secretariat, other national delegations, and the Commission, have to be taken into account by the presidency when it tries to broker deals (Schout and Vanhoonacker 2006:1054).

In this context, peer pressure and 'path-dependency' logic limit the ability of Eurosceptic segments inside governments to push their agendas. This was illustrated, for instance, by the 2003 Italian and 2009 Czech EU presidencies. In both cases, government coalitions were deeply divided over European integration and the main coalition party (the Italian Forza Italia and the Czech ODS) included significant Eurosceptic factions. Furthermore, both presidencies were scheduled at times when crucial decisions had to be made on EU institutional issues: the first three months of the IGC on the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2003, and the deadlock over the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty following the Irish referendum of 2008. In fact, both presidencies could only delay institutional reforms; they were not able to prevent them. While the Italian presidency tried to oppose significant institutional reforms during the 2003 IGC (the extension of EP powers in the adoption of the EU budget, the extension of the scope of qualified majority voting (QMV) to judicial cooperation, etc.) (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2004:19), it could only postpone them until the end of 2003, when the Irish government took over. Similarly, the Czech presidency in 2009 found itself in a paradoxical situation. It was expected to negotiate a deal with the Irish government in order to overcome Irish voters' hostility towards the Lisbon treaty, whilst Czech President Vaclav Klaus had used every possible means (including lodging a complaint before the Czech Constitutional Court) to block the ratification of the treaty in his own country (Král, Bartovic and Řiháčková 2009:23–5). Eventually, the Czech government negotiated the deal, which paved the way for a second referendum and the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

However, the presidency can be used as a platform by Eurosceptic actors. This was the case, for instance, with Vaclav Klaus' speech in the EP on 12 February 2009 at the beginning of the Czech EU presidency, as he made his case against political integration and the current EU institutional system, in a speech strongly

reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech. Furthermore, EU presidencies can be used by segments inside governments or the state apparatus to push through Eurosceptic initiatives, as was illustrated by the French presidency in the second half of 2008. While the French presidency was hailed by many as a case of successful leadership, the Mediterranean Union Initiative, launched by the French government, triggered considerable controversy in the EU. Initiated by Henri Guaino, adviser to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, this project initially aimed at revitalizing links between southern EU countries and partner countries from North Africa and the Middle East. Initially called the Mediterranean Union, it was conceived – and rightly perceived – as a rival to the existing Barcelona process (managed by the European Commission on behalf of the EU) and as a way to circumvent EU institutions in a region of traditional French influence. Moreover, it left out non-Mediterranean EU countries. Strongly criticized by other member states' governments (such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who warned against a 'splitting' of the Union) and lukewarmly welcomed by the European Commission, the project had to be amended to get rid of its most Eurosceptic elements. Renamed 'Union for the Mediterranean', it is now being developed within the existing EU framework of the Barcelona process and encompasses all EU members. This is a good example of how peer pressure and path dependency limit a presidency's ability to circumvent the EU institutional system. However, even in the revised version of the project, the Commission clearly appears to be marginalized in the Union for the Mediterranean, which is co-presided, on a rotating basis, by one EU member state and a partner country. Moreover, the Commission is not officially represented in the secretariat of the organization.

Decision-making procedures in the Council

Alongside the rotating presidency, the decision-making procedures in the Council, which allow one member state, or a small group of member states, to paralyse the Union's entire decision-making process, tend to give a disproportionate influence to Eurosceptic parties or factions inside governments. Such is the case with unanimous voting (as opposed to QMV), which remains the rule in several areas.

Certainly, whether the extension of the scope of QMV in the

Council enhances the EU decision-making capacity can be debated. On the one hand, decision-making in the Council is strongly permeated by a consensual political culture and formal voting is rare. Between 1998 and 2004, for instance, the Council formally voted in less than 20 per cent of cases. Moreover, decision by consensus tends to remain the rule, even when the treaty provides for QMV (70 per cent of cases over the same period) (Hayes-Renshaw *et al.* 2006). On the other hand, treaty provisions on QMV can be used by governments that support the adoption of a proposal to put pressure on reluctant governments, if the latter could lose in a formal vote.

Indeed, unanimous voting has historically allowed soft Eurosceptic governments to impose their views on others. The first instance of this was the so-called 'empty chair crisis' triggered by French President Charles de Gaulle in 1965, in order to prevent the extension of the scope of QMV, which was foreseen in the TEC. For a long time, the ill-named Luxembourg compromise (adopted in 1966) has allowed individual countries to veto significant pieces of legislation. For instance, following the 1965–66 crisis, proposals for a directive on the free movement of capital in the EC were abandoned by the Commission for two decades. Similarly, unanimous voting has allowed Tory-led British governments to oppose the adoption of significant pieces of legislation in the social and fiscal fields.

Provisions on treaty reform

What is true for day-to-day EU policy-making also applies to major, history-making decisions on institutional reforms. Indeed, treaty provisions on the amendment of EU treaties (Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)) foresee that, once member states have determined the amendments to be made to the treaties 'by common accord', 'the amendments shall enter into force after being ratified by all the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements'.

Certainly, the unanimity requirement (both for the adoption and for the ratification of amendments) may be considered as more democratic than the majority logic, at least for those who understand the EU primarily as a union of states. Furthermore, for pro-Europeans, the unanimity requirement may act as a safeguard against risks of institutional spillbacks, such as a situation in which a majority of governments would be willing to trim the powers of the Commission.

At the same time, requiring unanimity for the adoption of amendments allows one single government to block negotiations on treaty reform. As a consequence, Eurosceptic governments, or governments which are under pressure from Eurosceptics in the national arena, can block or delay significant reforms. For example, during the 1997 Amsterdam European Council, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl blocked the extension of the scope of QMV, which was supported by all other governments. Chancellor Kohl's attitude was mainly due to his weakened position in domestic politics on the eve of a crushing electoral defeat and to a growing Euroscepticism in some of the *Länder* (Peterson and Bromberg 1999:18). Another example relates to the negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty in June 2007, when the Polish government, led by Eurosceptic Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczyński, insisted on postponing the implementation of the new treaty provisions on double majority voting until 2014.

The unanimity requirement for the ratification of amendments also allows one country to block the entering into force of major treaty revisions. The failed ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty is a good example of this. Following its rejection by the French and Dutch electorate, the ratification process was put on hold by the European Council in June 2005, at a time when eighteen member states, accounting for 56 per cent of the EU population, had ratified the treaty. Finally, the lack of a uniform procedure to ratify treaty reforms tends to bias the distribution of political clout among member states during IGCs, by strengthening the position of those member states where treaty revisions are to be ratified by referendum and where high levels of public Euroscepticism make this ratification uncertain. This was illustrated by negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, as the UK (where Prime Minister Blair had committed himself to upholding a referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty) relied on this argument in order to obtain significant opt-outs.

The mounting pressure for national referenda

The increasing use of referenda in relation to European integration in the course of the 1990s is illustrative of how Eurosceptics influence the agenda of mainstream parties on issues of integration. In fact, it is not the demand for referenda *per se* which can be analyzed as a Eurosceptic claim, but rather demands for referenda in an