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EUROSCEPTICISM: A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT
(illustrated with particular reference to France)

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Abstract

As treatments of Euroscepticism proliferate, it is becoming more important to reflect on the utility of the label, and hence the concept, as a generic descriptor of a multidimensional political phenomenon occurring in a number of different countries. If it is useful, its range of uses nevertheless needs to be kept under review since the ways in which Euroscepticism is defined will reflect and help to determine judgements concerning the actual or potential significance of the phenomenon as a constraint on the shape and pace of the integration process. The purpose of this paper is to consider the question of definition in relation to the policy positions of political parties with regard to the EU, the place of Euroscepticism within different ideologies, public attitudes towards the EU and electoral behaviour.

Introduction

The earliest attested usage of the term, Eurosceptic (though hyphenated), in the British National Corpus is 1991 (http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html). Coined to describe a specific, British political phenomenon of intra-party division, particularly among Conservatives, its meaning has been extended in British political discourse, the media and academic circles to serve as a broad, generic label which covers varying degrees and kinds of resistance to EU integration from within any Member State or candidate country. Counterparts of the term have been imported into the languages of other European countries to refer to political groups or movements of opinion which are taken to be analogous to those in Britain. The word is often applied polemically by persons wishing to criticise the ideas of those whom they label Eurosceptics but many critics of the EU accept the label as applying to themselves and wear it with pride. Policymakers at national and at European level have come to see Euroscepticism as a factor to be taken into account, given that it has appeared to be widespread among some sections of some national publics, while a range of political parties or pressure groups have attempted to channel those public attitudes into political support. Intellectuals, politicians and other publicists have produced ideological arguments in support of Eurosceptical positions and networks of Eurosceptical websites have been established to form a virtual community in cyberspace.

Not surprisingly, a significant body of academic research on the subject of Euroscepticism has begun to be generated in recent years (contrary to the recent claim in Forster 2002: 3), either in single-state or comparative studies. Nevertheless, on close inspection, Euroscepticism remains a somewhat elusive phenomenon with unclear contours and borderlines. As is the case with most new, informal concepts which gain widespread currency within a few years in the light of divisions of opinion over major political changes, the notion of Euroscepticism is usually taken to be more or less self-evident, or at most, even in academic discussions, to need only brief definition. As a concept, Euroscepticism has not yet come to be seriously contested in the sense of arousing theoretical debate between representatives of different semantic/interpretative communities operating with rival conceptualisations. The work of Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak (for example, Taggart 1998; Sczerbiak 2001; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002), or of Petr Lovecky and Cas Mudde (2001), challenging Taggart's and Szczerbiak's definition, points towards a possible debate which will no doubt develop further as the literature on Euroscepticism is brought together more closely with the already extensive work on legitimacy, democratic deficit, multi-level governance, transparency, questions of collective identity among different sets of actors, etc. (as in, for example, Banchoff and Mitchell, 1998; Beetham and Lord, 1998; Hedetoft, 1998; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999).

As treatments of the subject proliferate, it is becoming more important to reflect on the utility of the label in relation to the phenomenon to which it refers. In fact, it is worth asking whether the label — and hence the concept — remains useful as a generic descriptor of different tendencies in public attitudes and a wide variety of political movements in a large number of very different countries. If it is useful, it needs to be refined by comparing the value of broader and narrower definitions of its meaning. After all, the way in which Euroscepticism is defined will reflect and help to determine judgements concerning its actual or potential significance as a constraint on the shape and pace of the integration process. The purpose of this paper is to consider the question of definition in relation to the policy positions of political parties with regard to the EU, the place of Euroscepticism within different ideologies, public attitudes towards the EU and electoral behaviour.

For present purposes a single country, France, is as a focus for discussion of the issues. Although the discourse of some French Eurosceptics makes great play with the notion of French exceptionalism, there is nothing very exceptional about the general characteristics of French Euroscepticism, except in the banal sense that at a certain level of detail the politics of any state are specific to that state alone. The kinds of Euroscepticism represented in the French political arena are broadly typical of those found throughout the EU. Indeed, to the extent that public attitudes can be captured by EU-wide opinion polls, France has been close to the arithmetical average on many of the fundamental questions asked. However, the nature of the French multiparty system and certain aspects of French political culture can sometimes create an exaggerated impression of the extent of the Eurosceptical phenomenon. Of course, examining one Member State alone cannot tell us very much about the large question of whether or in what ways Euroscepticism corresponds to a fundamental crisis of legitimacy for the EU, but it can serve as an example of the problems of conceptualising the phenomenon.

Questions of definition
Given that Euroscepticism has come to be used as a catch-all generic label for negative attitudes to the EU, is it worth retaining the term in academic discourse? Perhaps. We need a convenient word which captures the common characteristics of a complex international phenomenon. Whether the "Euro" component is taken to be shorthand for the EU or for some other notion of Europe will be a matter of convention, but at least it points towards an identifiable object. The "scepticism" element literally suggests an attitude and an intellectual posture of doubt with regard to the object, EU or Europe, and by fortunate coincidence the suffix, "-ism" happens to be a component of most labels for ideologies, so the word lends itself to being incorporated into the domain of political belief systems.

Extended to a generic concept, then, Euroscepticism might be defined in a broad, deliberately laborious way, as *attitudes and opinions represented in discourses and behaviours (ranging from participation in organized political action to voting in elections or referenda and responding to public opinion polls) which express doubt as to the desirability **and/or** benefits **and/or** long-term viability of European **or/and** EU integration as an objective **or** in the general framework created so far **or** in some important aspects of that framework of institutions, processes and policies **and/or** as it is anticipated to occur in the future.*

I think that would roughly cover all of the variant usages of the term. The recurrence of *and/or* in relation to key characteristics is intended to underline the huge internal diversity of the phenomenon which the term purports to capture. Indeed, precisely because the word has become such a catch-all for labelling everything from public attitudes to political ideas and ideology, party positions and strategies, or governmental negotiating postures, there is a need to set parameters which allow distinctions of degree and kind to be made.

Applied particularly to the comparative study of European political parties, the conceptual-isation used by Paul Taggart (1998) and refined in his collaborative work with Aleks Sczerbiak (2001, 2002) has been influential. It establishes a distinction between hard and soft versions of Euroscepticism. In its most recent formulation, the notion of hard Euroscepticism applies to principled objections to the EU and European integration, such that the hard Eurosceptical party in a Member State would advocate withdrawal or in a candidate state would advocate non-accession. Alternatively, a party may advocate policies so far at variance with those of the EU as currently conceived that they are tantamount to opposition to the whole project. Equally, a posture which articulates conditional support for membership on

such demanding terms that they are never likely to be fulfilled, is taken to be implicitly demanding withdrawal and is therefore placed in the same category. Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, does not involve principled objection to membership or to EU integration, but qualified opposition based on concerns about one or more policy areas. This may occur, for example, because the current direction of the integration process in the given policy area(s) is interpreted as being contrary to the national interest.

Kopecky and Mudde (2001), in the context of an analysis of Euroscepticism in four candidate countries in Central Europe, criticise this model on the ground that Taggart and Sczerbiak do not pay attention to the ideological dimension of policy positions adopted by parties with regard to the EU. Kopecky and Mudde outline a set of four categories to cover pro- as well as anti-EU parties, based on two contrasting sets of positions. On the ideological plane Europhiles are taken to be those who are committed to the ideas of integration underlying the EU, whereas Europhobes do not. Europhiles are therefore still Europhile, even if they object to particular aspects of the EU's actual or proposed development. On the strategic plane, EU-optimists broadly accept the way in which the EU is developing in practice, whereas EU-pessimists do not consider that it is functioning well, or is likely to be in the future. From this it follows that parties can be divided under four headings, with their accompanying labels. Euroenthusiasts combine Europhile ideological dispositions with EU-optimist strategic positions on the ground that there is an acceptable degree of correspondence between the ideal and the emerging reality. Eurorealists, on the other hand, combine Europhile ideological orientations with EU-pessimism, since they perceive the EU as failing to enact their conception of what integration should be. A third set are labelled Eurocynics to capture the fact that they do not believe in the integrationist ideal but see potential gain in involvement in the EU anyway. Finally, Eurosceptics are those who do not believe in the ideal of European integration or in the benefits of belonging to the EU.

Taggart's and Szczerbiak's model is undoubtedly workable. They themselves have applied it in a refined and interesting way (in addition to the works cited above, see also, for example, Sczerbiak 2002). Other researchers have also used it in a number of valuable analyses of the party politics of Euroscepticism (for example, Batory 2001; Henderson 2001). Nevertheless, while it would be undesirable to set out a system of numerous, rigid categories to try to capture the nuances and shifts of party positions, a straightforward binary division based on the metaphors of hardness and softness appears a little loose and impressionistic. For example, the hard category blurs the important distinction between groups which argue that their country should be (more or less) outside the EU and those which argue for a return to the *status quo ante* of treaty provisions which pertained prior to some modification which the groups find unacceptable. It does not follow that the latter will join the former if they do not succeed in their campaign for revision. The definition also truncates analysis by sealing off Euroscepticism from positions reflecting varying degrees of support for the EU in its present form and/or its current direction of development. In particular, this gives rise to problems in handling the concept of soft Euroscepticism, because there is scarcely any political party which does not object to some feature of the EU as presently constituted. How is the distinction to be made between soft Euroscepticism and a constructive policy of campaigning to improve the EU in its own interest by pointing out what is wrong with it and proposing better alternatives? This is a particularly pertinent question in view of the fact that parties frequently shift their positions over time without necessarily acknowledging the extent to which they have done so, since they face the eternal dilemmas of balancing electoral appeal and inter-party competition or co-operation with intra-party concerns and the need to keep grass-roots activists on board (for an example, see Daniels 1998 on the British Labour Party).

Kopecky and Mudde were right to point out that the question of how ideology interacts with strategy in the production and modification of policy positions had not been sufficiently explored by Taggart and Sczerbiak — who have acknowledged that it is an area needing further research (2002: 28). It enables Kopecky and Mudde to explore the interplay between the two dimensions of motivation structured by the fact that, as they say, "ideology determines a party's attitude towards the general ideas underlying the process of integration, while strategy can play an important role in explaining a party's attitude towards EU membership" (2001: 23). However, while their model has the advantage of distinguishing between the two types of input and packaging them together neatly to produce a more sophisticated set of classifications than the soft/hard model, it has the disadvantage of treating ideology in a rather reductive way, as if it could be encapsulated in a binary opposition between Europhile commitment to, or Europhobic antagonism towards, an ideal of European integration. Of course, the two authors acknowledge that there can be many different conceptions of what integration should entail, but the enormous variation and fluidity within and between ideological currents limits the usefulness of the categorisation.

My own view at present is that broad party positions towards the EU should be categorised under descriptive labels which imply no assumptions as to the question of how those positions are reached in terms of ideological or strategic reasoning. This is not to say that the motivations of choices should not be considered. On the contrary, they are obviously essential to any real understanding of the dynamics of public debate and political action in this area. However, as I shall argue in more detail later, ideology needs to be addressed in different terms from the simple labelling of types of party positions. I suggest a set of six categories, while emphasising, of course, that they are merely practical aids to describing approximate locations along a continuum. For clarity they should all carry the prefix, EU-, but that would be cumbersome and unnecessary in the present context. The set is as follows:

- *Rejectionist*: positions opposed to **either** (i) membership of the EU **or** (ii) participation in some particular institution or policy.
- *Revisionist*: positions in favour of a return to the state of affairs before some major treaty revision, **either** (i) in relation to the entire configuration of the EU **or** (ii) in relation to one or more policy areas.
- *Minimalist*: positions accepting the status quo but resisting further integration **either** (i) of the entire structure **or** (ii) of some particular policy area(s).
- *Gradualist*: positions supporting further integration **either** (i) of the system as a whole **or** (ii) in some particular policy area(s), so long as the process is taken slowly and with great care.
- *Reformist*: positions of constructive engagement, emphasising the need to improve one or more existing institutions and/or practices.
- *Maximalist*: positions in favour of pushing forward with the existing process as rapidly as is practicable towards higher levels of integration **either** (i) of the overall structure **or** (ii) in some particular policy areas.

The purpose of this classification is to allow somewhat tighter specification of positions than either of the two models mentioned earlier, but without engaging in excessive proliferation of categories. The labels are intended to be value-neutral and as unencumbered as possible by metaphorical associations. They are not intended to convey any suggestion of a specific content to the positions which they describe, beyond basic stances towards the EU's development, either as a totality or in some particular policy area(s) (for example, a party

might be revisionist or even rejectionist with regard to EMU in the form currently instituted but reformist in its overall posture). They imply nothing about the route by which any group or individual might have reached them, whether from the left or from the right. I do not think we need to tie the question of ideology into the categorisation but, of course, that does not mean excluding ideology altogether. It is merely to observe that further specification requires different levels of analysis where issues of ideology, strategy, institutional factors and political context can be brought in. What we can do first with these categories before deepening the analysis is examine national distributions of parties and pressure groups — or of public opinion if we have sufficiently specific data — across the categories, compare them with the distributions in other countries and examine changes over time, if we wish to do so. It is a mapping exercise as a preliminary to analysing causes and effects.

The importance of establishing categories for both negative and positive positions arises from the fact that parties often shift over time. Clearly a transition from overall EU-rejectionism to overall EU-maximalism would be the most unlikely for both ideological and practical reasons, and I cannot think of any instances at present, but no change between any one type of position and any other is absolutely inconceivable. If we take the French case, we have seen the Front National (FN) move from reformism in the 1980s to revisionism in the 1990s to rejectionism in the 2000s. The Communists and the Greens — preceded by the Socialists a decade earlier — moved from rejectionism in the 1980s to revisionism in the early-to-mid-1990s to reformism in the late 1990s in the context of *la gauche plurielle* coalition (admittedly a particularly ambiguous version of reformism in the case of the Communists). Of course, calculated ambiguity characterises the positions of many parties on the basis of trade-offs between factions. The Gaullists contain within their ranks revisionists alongside reformists, and the balance in policy stance has fluctuated over time, sometimes producing partial splits, as in the case of Charles Pasqua's revisionist RPF, originally launched in the 1999 EP election campaign with Philippe de Villiers, whose own MPF had been formed in 1994 mainly from renegade elements of the centre-right UDF (on divisions within the right, see Startin 2002). The FN is the only overtly rejectionist party, although the Trotskyite LCR could easily be, given the extent of its critique of the EU but, as far as I am aware, it does not call for withdrawal. Unabashed maximalists do exist in France in the form of the Left Radicals and François Bayrou's rump UDF, but even they may choose to emphasise reformism at a given juncture, as François Bayrou did during the 2002 presidential campaign, when all of the candidates were at pains not to run hard on the EU issue.

Finally, it remains to add a brief remark on the label of Euroscepticism. It is impossible to legislate in matters of linguistic usage. The widespread use of Euroscepticism as a generic term makes it very unlikely that it will be supplanted by some other, more precise term. When Kopecky and Mudde argue that it is perverse to throw together under the Eurosceptical label parties which are fundamentally in favour of some form of integration alongside nationalists who are not, they are right, but part of the problem is with the label itself, since it blurs the distinction between the EU (a specific, recently originated, developing system of institutions, policies and practices) and Europe (as a geographically situated set of peoples grouped in states). It would be worth removing the semantic confusion. No significant political party, even of extreme right-wing nationalists, admits to being hostile to Europe and Europeans in general. The principle of international co-operation between European countries is always supported in some form or other as an alternative to the EU. The problem could be resolved by emphasising that Euroscepticism means EU-scepticism. That is the label which I will use throughout the remainder of this paper.

Ideology

In the growing scholarly literature on the EU as a cross-cutting issue of political contention less attention has been given to the ideological dimension than to the instrumental dimensions of party strategies and tactics or to systemic institutional factors, interpreted in the light of rational actor assumptions (for example, Lees 2002). I do not wish to suggest that these approaches are not valuable in themselves, far from it, or that the ideological dimension has been entirely sidelined (see, for example, Hix 1999a) but merely that some aspects of the ideological dimension have not yet been much explored. Ideology is of central significance for obvious reasons. Policy positions represent the interface between ideology and political practice, where sets of fundamental assumptions (about human beings and society), normative values, core beliefs and principles of action engage with instrumental considerations of feasibility and marketability within a structure of institutional and contextual opportunities and constraints. Ideologies are not owned by political parties but are merely represented by them — more or less — since they are also shared and propagated with widely varying degrees of sophistication, coherence and commitment by other sections of society to whom parties seek to cater. Whatever the extent to which the motives, agendas and strategies of political elites can be analysed in instrumental terms, they still have to account for themselves to grass-roots activists, to electors, to each other *and* to themselves in terms of values and convictions which are ideological in nature. Ideology is not mere window-dressing.

The EU gives rise to particularly complex ideological questions. While it is possible to make relatively objective assessments of particular features of the EU and its operations, the complexities of the processes involved in European integration, as well as the imponderables involved in hypothesizing alternatives to integration or even of predicting the future course of integration itself, mean that the *overall* costs and benefits of the process are not calculable by any objective measurement. Political debate on the issue is therefore coloured particularly heavily by ideology. This has been especially true since the early 1990s, not only because the Treaty of European Union marked a major step-change in integration which attracted public attention to a far greater degree than the Single European Act had done, but also because the EU's role and status in the world have been, and still are, undergoing massive transformation in the emerging global reconfiguration of power since the end of the Cold War. It is not surprising, therefore, that besides giving rise to ideologically marked arguments for or against particular features of the EU, or even against the whole principle of the EU, the future of Europe has generated a rich mythology. That is to say, it has produced myths both in the popular sense of false stories about the EU, but also in the more technical sense of narratives which are ideologically coloured in their selection and/or interpretation of past, present and predicted events, whether or not the facts recounted are more or less accurate (on political myth, see Flood 1996/2002).

The fact that the EU is a hybrid, multi-level, unfinished construction not only invites ideological appropriation, but also poses difficult challenges. It is extremely malleable. It is open to widely differing interpretations within as well as between different ideological currents. To what extent is it (becoming) democratic? To what extent is it (becoming) a bastion of economic neoliberalism? Is it destroying the identities and autonomy of its constituent nations or is it protecting them insofar as necessary adaptation to modern global conditions makes it healthy to do so? Is it a grandiose folly, condemned to fail by the laws of history and human nature? Or does it represent the possibility of a truly rational, postmodern order? Any of those and many other fundamental questions could be answered negatively or

positively from within any ideological current, depending on selection and interpretation of supporting evidence. Over the long term the theorisation of the EU's development will perhaps contribute to reshaping ideologies, at least in the sense that it may replace the nation-state as the dominant frame of empirical reference against which general principles are measured. Nevertheless, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that the EU and the Europeanisation of Member States are ideological *issues* which are at the operative end of ideological thinking in Martin Seliger's (1976) terms, or, to use Michael Freeden's (1996) terminology, they are peripheral components within the larger configurations of decontested concepts which constitute the major ideologies (although it is true that those ideologies are themselves in flux). To illustrate those points with reference to the French case, I will refer to EU-scepticism alone, but they could equally have been demonstrated in relation to EU-enthusiasm. Limitations of space also oblige me to deal with the topic closer to the operative end than to trace the linkages of ideas right back to the core concepts of the various major traditions.

Unlike nationalism, of which it is sometimes, but not always, a vehicle, EU-scepticism is a purely negative concept, like anticapitalism, antimilitarism or antisemitism. In the discourse of political and economic elites and intellectuals it can involve more or less coherent, highly elaborated arguments expressing sets of ideas, beliefs and attitudes relating to the ordering of society but, as I have already suggested, it obviously does not constitute a full-blown ideology in its own right, since it does not offer a comprehensive, potentially universalisable view of man and society. It focuses only on negative aspects of particular dimensions of a particular set of societies insofar as they are bound together in the EU. It might perhaps be considered as a partial ideology but it is more usefully viewed as a component of other ideologies. Variation between different versions of EU-scepticism, as well as between the arrangements offered as preferable alternatives to the present mode of EU integration, depends on the wider ideological framework in which EU-scepticism is embedded. There are characteristic areas of difference between left-wing and right-wing perspectives. There are also differences within the broad left and the broad right. Furthermore, different national traditions and contexts generate further variations of focus or emphasis.

Obviously this is not to deny that there are also areas of common ground. In France, as in other Member States, the most widely aired arguments which recur across the ideological spectrum focus on objections to the EU's overcentralisation, bureaucracy, technocracy, lack of transparency, lack of democratic accountability, adverse social as well as economic consequences of EMU, and the inappropriateness or unworkability of the Schengen provisions on asylum and immigration. However, in contrast to right-wing parties in Britain and Denmark, the French right, like the left, also emphasises the damage caused by neo-liberal trade policy driven by the US-dominated GATT/WTO agenda for globalisation, and the continuing subordination of defence to NATO under American hegemony (on the British right, see Flood 2000; Turner 2000; Forster 2002). In these regards EU-scepticism creates strange bedfellows by cross-cutting traditional ideological divisions.

Still, the extent of the shared ground between right and left should not be overstated, as I believe it is by Bertrand Benoit (1997), who locates all of the French EU-sceptical groupings under the general heading of social nationalism. Some groups are much more social than others, and some are not nationalistic, whereas others are. Left-wing EU-scepticisms are very different from right-wing versions. This is not surprising because they reflect different views of human nature, different visions of history, different combinations of values and different conceptions of how society should be ordered. Among the left, notwithstanding differences

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of emphasis in their criticisms of the EU or in the positive alternatives offered, there is a high degree of convergence between Green new-left critiques of the EU and those of the traditional socialist and communist left as well as the post-Trotskyist LCR, all of which now have strong Red/Green elements of ecologism incorporated in their policy platforms.

EU-scepticism of the left attacks the EU on the grounds that its commitment to liberal capitalism, deregulation, free trade and globalization is inimical to the interests of disadvantaged sections of European and other societies. All left-wing groups demand a redistributive, social Europe with major extensions of economic rights of working people, strong support for the public sector, public services, welfare provision and major advances in environmental protection. All favour a more open European citizenship: their shared objection to Schengen is that it is too restrictive and exclusionary in intent towards would-be immigrants and asylum applicants. All defend the need for a fully democratised Europe which gives full scope to decision-making at national and sub-national levels as well as at supranational level, with a vital dimension of accountability to national parliaments. The antimilitarist stance of the new and the traditional left equally restricts support for European defence co-operation except for strictly limited purposes of UN-sanctioned peacekeeping.

However, there are also divergences. Whereas the Greens are Eurofederalist and one-worldist, the LCR implicitly likewise, with its own model, the PCF profoundly unclear though still probably confederalist and intergovernmentalist, the MDC is unabashedly intergovernmentalist and wary of supranationalism. It constantly stresses the fundamental reality and centrality of the nation state as the lynchpin of democratic governance and of true internationalism, at least until some distant time when there is such a thing as a single European people able to exercise meaningful sovereignty together.

The positions of the right and extreme right show marked differences from those of the left, with the partial exception of the national-republican MDC. Their objections to the EU focus heavily on defence of national sovereignty, intergovernmentalism and some form of confederal model allowing plentiful scope for variable geometry and variable degrees of integration between member states. Defence of national identities against EU homogenization is seen as vital. Whereas EU-sceptical parties of the left condemn the restrictiveness of Schengen as concerns immigration and asylum, the right attack it as a recipe for massive influxes of economic migrants claiming to be asylum seekers. The perceived threat is not only viewed in terms of disruption of domestic labour markets, but also of demands on the welfare state, problems of integration, and the dilution of national culture.

At the same time, unlike the strongly free-trading, pro-NATO, Atlanticist positions of Conservative EU-sceptics in Britain or the national populists of the Danish People's Party, for instance, the positions of the French right are anti-Atlanticist, antiliberal and Euro- or national-protectionist in trade policy and ambivalent or hostile towards NATO in matters of defence. However, their antiliberal stance does not extend very far into other economic areas. They are notably hostile to the budgetary, and hence the taxation, demands required to sustain the costs of redistributive EU programmes including Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund, and even the Common Agricultural Policy. Similarly, in the domestic economic sphere, while they emphasise the duty of social solidarity and participation, including the maintenance of an adequate system of welfare provision, they remain partisans of deregulation, privatisation, reduced taxation on business and encouragement of popular capitalism. And with regard to defence, while they advocate fundamental reform or the scrapping of NATO, their desire for an autonomous European military alliance is coupled

with emphasis on the need for France to restore its own independent capacity and increase its military strength.

Like the left- and right-wing ideological arguments, the respective EU-sceptical mythologies produced by left and right can share common ground, but they also show significant differences reflecting the values, beliefs and preoccupations of different ideological currents. Conspiracy myths offer negative accounts of the integration process as a whole or of particular aspects of it, often including dire predictions of the future if the process is not reversed. The activity of specific groups of EU actors — and especially of the Commission with its retinue of Brussels bureaucrats — are depicted as agencies of damage to the interests of EU member states or, more specifically, the interests of the state with which the purveyor of the account identifies. Negative stereotypes feed into such stories. The arch-threat for the French often takes the form of the hegemonic United States outside the EU but seeking to dominate it, with the British as its lapdogs but also with the connivance of the globalist, Atlanticist free-traders of the Commission. However, wider discursive frameworks and contexts give the distinctive mark of the different ideological frameworks. For example, a distinctively right-wing class of narratives corresponds to variant forms of traditional nationalistic, exceptionalist, often xenophobic, mythology based on deterministic notions of a permanent, unique national character which the teller attributes to his/her own country (for further discussion, see Flood 1997). The essential virtues and qualities of that people are presented in contrast to the lesser qualities of other European nations, accompanied by claims that the continuation of the heritage requires resistance to absorption within the stifling mediocrity of an all-embracing EU superstate. Idealised interpretations of French national history feed arguments to the effect that France can once again play a leading role in Europe and the world if only the country refuses to be absorbed into a supranationalist form of European unity. On the left, the accounts tend to focus on the predatory activity of international capital in contrast to the redemptive vision of an ultra-democratic, economically sustainable, workers' Europe.

The conclusion of this excessively brief sketch of the ideological dimension is this. The EU, as a multidimensional complex of issues, has been embedded in the wider ideological frameworks of political parties, pressure groups, intellectuals, the media and the wider public. The EU is interpreted in the light of pre-existing set of beliefs characteristic of a particular ideological family. Major ideologies are not defined by allegiance or hostility to some particular régime existing at a particular period, but by adherence to a set of attitudes, values and beliefs, in the light of which a particular ordering of society may be judged benign or malefic. Similarly, the EU is a contingent form to which ideological evaluations are applied. But ideologies are extremely malleable and open to reinterpretation (subject to the constraints of orthodoxies, sacred texts and political controls). That is part of the reason why no single ideological current absolutely guarantees that a party will be rejectionist, revisionist or EU-sceptical at all. Even a nationalist party can hold EU-enthusiastic positions if it chooses to believe that the EU can be shaped to defend national interests more effectively than the nation can alone (the Front National in Belgium illustrates the point). The fact that EU-scepticism and EU-enthusiasm cut across the traditional boundaries of left and right to create common ground between groups on different sides of the political/ideological spectrum does not mean that these shared opinions transcend, reconfigure or, still less, efface fundamental ideological divisions on core beliefs concerning the human condition and the ordering of society. The EU as an ideological issue is structured by traditional currents. It does not structure them, although reflection on the nature or the history of the EU could potentially feed back into reappraisal of other, more general dimensions of an ideology. Be that as it

may, the essential point for present purposes is not only that ideology needs to be taken more fully into consideration, but also that it needs to be understood more broadly than in straightforward analysis of party manifestos. It then becomes interesting to analyse the conditions of possibility within different ideological currents which legitimise, but place certain limits on, a range of EU-sceptical or EU-enthusiastic positions.

Public attitudes (1): the apparent importance of indifference
Public attitudes often figure in discussions of the rise of EU-scepticism in some Member States. However, notwithstanding the growing body of empirical work in this area, there is a long way to go before we understand them very well. Pending deeper qualitative and quantitative research, the notions of EU-scepticism and EU-enthusiasm have to be applied in a very approximate way. Clearly the categories used to define party positions would not map neatly onto aggregated data that has been acquired from responses to questions which were not asked with those categorisations in view. We can provisionally draw inferences from particular sets of indices in published Eurobarometer and national opinion poll results, but the information is oblique (on the difficulties of research in this area, see Edye and Delgado-Moreira 2001). Over time, as research continues, the indications of national and transnational trends will undoubtedly become clearer as more archive data is subjected to secondary analysis, while new data offers better insights into current and possible future developments (for example, Haesly 2001; Schild 2001). For present purposes, since my own research in this area has barely begun, I merely want to use the French case to emphasise, in the light of basic published data, the extent to which the definition of EU-scepticism becomes extremely blurred.

It has become a truism that the permissive consensus of the previous thirty years in France concerning European integration broke down in. Since then, support has never returned to the level it had reached by the later 1980s 1992 (for general studies of public opinion, see for example, Cautrès and Reynié 2000, 2002; Reynié and Cautrès 2001). This has fed into, and been fed by, political controversy over the implications of Maastricht and subsequent treaty revisions at Amsterdam in 1996 and Nice in 2001. We can gain some sense of the potential proportion of rejectionists from the figures for the question of whether respondents consider France's membership of the EU to be a good or a bad thing. Presumably a person who considers membership to be undesirable would want France to leave, if that was feasible, although the correlation is not automatic, since he/she might reason that the costs of leaving now outweighed the costs of staying in. Nevertheless, in principle they would be rejectionists. Those who fall into this group are very much a minority. The proportion of respondents who regarded membership of the EU as a bad thing had been below 10% in the 1980s, but from 1990 to 2001, between a low of 8% in 1990 and a high of 19% in late 1996, it had run at 12-14%, giving an approximate average of 12.7% very close to the EU average of roughly 12.5% (see Eurobarometers 34-56). In Eurobarometer 57 (fieldwork spring 2002), for which only partial results were available at the time of writing, the figure stood at 13%.

If we continue to concentrate on the more negative side for the moment, clearly the fairly small percentage of respondents who regard membership as a bad thing does not exhaust the pool of actual or potential EU-sceptics, since we have to suppose that there are others who would not want France to leave the EU, and who might even consider membership a positive good in principle, but who would prefer it if the EU was less integrated than it has become in recent years or at least that integration did not proceed much further. In addition, there are those who take the option of saying that they see membership as neither good nor bad. This proportion stood at 35% in EB57, having averaged approximately 28.9% over the period

from 1990 to 2000, compared with the EU average of 24.7%, with a high of 37% in 1996, and a low of 19% in 1990. Again, it can be inferred that those who choose the neutral response are unenthusiastic, though this does not necessarily mean that they are sceptical.

Certainly the lack of strong commitment is striking among a substantial percentage. For example, in EB50 (fieldwork spring 1998) and EB55 (fieldwork spring 2001) respondents were asked what their feelings would be if the EU was scrapped. They were offered the choice of very sorry, indifferent or very relieved. What is striking is that, while the proportion of respondents who would be very relieved is small, at 13% in the 1998 survey and 15% in 2001, those who would be indifferent amounted to 39% in 1998, as opposed to 38% who would be very sorry, and in 2001, the ranks of the indifferent had swollen to 48%, with only 28% saying they would be very sorry. If we put these figures alongside others, using EB56 (the most recent to be released in full) for illustration, we gain an impression of a substantial population who at the very least lack commitment to the recent and current direction of the EU: 25% of respondents claiming that France had not benefited from membership (in fact, the proportion who do think France has benefited from membership has been below 60% since 1992 and has often been below 50% since the mid-1990s); 34% tending not to trust the EU, 34% claiming to feel a sense of national identity only, rather than some element of European (for comparison with Germany, see Schild 2001); 37% showing some degree of dissatisfaction with EU democracy; and varying proportions of revisionists on key policies, including 30% opposed to EMU, 28% opposed to CFP, and 46% against enlargement.

This picture can be supplemented with snapshots from national opinion polls, such as the massive IFOP exit poll (13 June) taken after the EP elections in 1999. Then, when asked if they thought the EU had been moving in the right or the wrong direction since Maastricht, 37% said the direction had been right, but 38% considered it to have been wrong and 25% made no reply. In the same poll respondents were also asked whether they preferred a federal Europe or a Europe of states: 29% chose a federal Europe, but 41% a Europe of states and 30% made no reply. When a similar question was asked in another IFOP poll (21-22 March) in the run-up to the 2002 presidential election, 34% chose the federal answer, but 58% favoured a Europe of states. All of this could be taken impressionistically to suggest that, beyond the hard core of up to one sixth of the population who are convinced EU-sceptics, there is a much larger group, possibly as much as one quarter of the population, which is either worried by, or at least lacks commitment to, the progress of the EU. This is confirmed by annual surveys carried out for the Ministry of European Affairs by Ipsos over the period 1997-2001, which show an average of 37% viewing the EU integration process more or less negatively, with hostility, fear or indifference.

Still, the search for EU-scepticism should not be allowed to obscure the other side of the coin. The simple question about membership will obviously not tell us about maximalists but merely about those who are more likely to be within the range from gradualist, through reformist to maximalist. Positive endorsement of membership had been above the EU average throughout most of the 1980s, peaking around 73% in 1987, falling a little then peaking again at 70% in 1991. It dropped away after that to run close to the average throughout the 1990s, with a low of 46% in 1995 and an average around 52.8%, as compared with an approximate mean of 54.9% for the EU as a whole over that period. It showed signs of falling away again in the course of 2001-2 so that it stood at 47% at the time of data collection for EB57, compared with the EU average of 53% for that survey. If the national poll that I quoted earlier held good for the period since Maastricht, then only about one third of the population think the TEU and its subsequent revisions have been well judged, and only

about one third favour a federal outcome for the EU. Nevertheless, when asked whether they wanted the EU to play a more important, less important or the same role in their daily lives in five years' time, EB56 showed only 9% wanting its role reduced, while 45% wanted it more important and 36% wanted it to remain the same. That pattern broadly correlates with responses to a question about the desired pace of integration in the surveys for the Ministry of European Affairs, which show support for faster integration averaging 51% from 1997 to 2001, with those who want it to remain the same averaging 35% and those who want it to slow down averaging just under 10%. It would be pointless to trawl through endless series of indicators. Suffice it to add two further points. In EB56 (at a time when those who saw membership as a good thing had fallen to 47%), out of a list of 26 major policy areas, French respondents showed absolute majorities, sometimes very large ones, in favour of EU rather national decision-making on 17 of the areas named. Finally, it is worth adding that France has regularly recorded among the higher percentages in EU Member States, at over 60%, for those who feel some measure of European, as opposed to exclusively national identity — although this does not automatically equate with EU identification, of course.

Overall, insofar as one can generalise about public support for the EU in fifteen different member states, France appears to have stood within the middle ground since the early 1990s, but with recent disquiet tending to push it closer to the Scandinavian countries and the UK which have regularly shown the largest percentages of EU-sceptical respondents. Distributions of support within the French population also fit the predominant EU pattern: higher among men than women; not varying hugely across age groups except among the very young (who are the most positive) and the elderly (who are the least positive); *but* varying by socio-economic class, level of education and degree of politicisation: broadly speaking, the younger, the more educated, the more affluent or aspiring and the more highly politicised respondents are, the more likely it is that they will support EU integration (see Gabel 1998 and Hix 1999b for detailed analyses of EU-wide trends).

These are merely oblique snapshots, but it can be inferred (with some support from a major qualitative survey published by Eurobarometer in 2001) that although the balance of French public opinion supports the principle of continuing European integration, and only a fairly small percentage show outright hostility to the whole project, there are quite high levels of dissatisfaction with aspects of the EU's governance and the direction of integration. In addition to the outright rejectionists, a large section of opinion is soft, unenthusiastic, indifferent or wary to varying degrees. There is a large disparity between the detail that we have of party positions and what we know of public opinion. Parties are in the business of presenting policies and seeking to influence public opinion. Ordinary citizens do not have to hold consistent or coherent opinions or pay serious attention to EU issues which must very often appear aridly technical and distant. Therefore it is not surprising that survey data may suggest contradictory tendencies as well as widespread indifference. EU-scepticism at mass public level can be understood as being as much about lack of positive commitment as about active doubt or hostility. That makes the need for further quantitative and qualitative investigation based on individual data for purposes of typological profiling all the more important.

Public attitudes (2): elections
Clearly there is a connection between public attitudes to the EU and voting patterns. Or at least there should be, especially in EP elections. However, there is plentiful evidence to show that the EU is of relatively low salience as a voting issue and EP elections (as well as referenda on the EU) are perceived as second-order competitions in which voters feel greater

freedom as to which party they vote for and whether they vote at all (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Abrial and Pina 1999; Hix 1999a). Furthermore, these elections are used to a greater or lesser degree by large numbers of voters as vehicles for expression of more general perceptions of government or opposition performance. That makes it difficult to assess the significance of EU-scepticism as an electoral factor. France illustrates the point. In the French case, on the face of it, the existence of a sizeable minority of people who have shown either hostility or indifference to EU integration has apparently made the potential electorate for EU-sceptical parties substantial, although the pool of voters for radically Europhobic, rejectionist parties would be far more limited. The referendum of 1992 and the European elections of 1994 and 1999 demonstrated that there was a reservoir of EU-sceptical attitudes which could translate into votes. In the wake of the stunning 51%/49% split in the Maastricht referendum the 1994 Euro-election saw EU-sceptical, revisionist lists take some 41% of the vote, and in 1999 just over 50%. Furthermore, the record low turnout in 1999 was itself a major cause for concern to EU-enthusiasts. Admittedly, the figures have to be treated with caution. In 1994 on the left, EU-sceptical voters could choose between the LCR/LO, the PCF, the MDC and one of the Green lists. By 1999 left-wing EU-sceptics who did not want the LCR/LO (5.2%) might have found the message of the PCF (6.8%) and the Greens (9.7%) rather blurred, because in the context of the *gauche plurielle* the PCF and the Greens tended to emphasise constructive reformism more than radical critique and the MDC was in with the rest of the PS on a reformist platform, subject to articulating its own objections to federalism (see Taggart 1998 for comparative analysis of this type of trajectory, and Milner 2000, Usherwood 2002 for overviews of the development of organized EU-scepticism in France).

On the right the situation was clearer. In 1994 EU-sceptics could choose the FN or L'Autre Europe (basis for the MPF, founded in November 1994), and there was also the unclassifiable but predominantly conservative CPNT. In 1999 the range of choice had to some extent increased, thanks to the broadening of the MPF through alliance with some of the EU-sceptical Gaullists to form the RPF, denouncing the mainstream right as well as the governmental left for selling out French interests and no doubt aiming to win disillusioned voters not only from the centre-right but also from the extreme right in the wake of the split in the FN (5.7%) which had produced the MNR (3.3%) alongside it. In the event, the 13% scored by the RPF did not greatly increase on the 1994 vote for the MPF. The schism in the FN undermined the aggregate base of support for the extreme right but it has to be assumed that many former FN voters simply abstained from participating at all. The CPNT (6.8%), meanwhile, made an increase on its score five years earlier. Nevertheless, the RPF's performance had attracted considerable media attention, which encouraged its activists to attempt to create a new, EU-sceptical, nationally minded party with mass appeal beyond the traditional confines of the right.

But what did this signify in terms of Europe as a voting issue? To what extent did people vote on EU issues, even in EP elections? The answer appears to be that the EU remained very much a secondary concern. A BVA pre-election poll in late May 1999 found 58% of respondents saying that they would vote mainly on domestic issues, 29% that they would vote primarily on European issues and 13% giving no reply. A massive IFOP exit poll of 17,530 voters on 13 June 1999 suggested that the European dimension had increased in salience, but still a relative majority of 44% said they had voted mainly on domestic issues, 37% mainly on European and 19% making no reply. Still, whether or not voters had chosen primarily on domestic or European issues, there clearly was real anxiety about the recent direction of integration. Asked whether they considered that Europe had been moving

broadly in right direction since Maastricht 38% said that they thought it had been so, but the positive/negative split was more or less even since 37% said they thought it had gone in the wrong direction (a view held most strongly among voters for the LCR/LO, PCF, RPF or FN lists but shared by 15-25% among voters for all other parties), while 25% gave no reply. Interestingly, when asked about the form which the future Europe should take, 41% favoured a Europe of states, while 29% supported a federal Europe, fewer than the 30% who gave no reply.

Among all groups of voters, those who had supported revisionist lists had also voted most strongly on domestic issues as opposed to European, with the LCR/LO voters dividing 48% mainly domestic versus 32% mainly European, the RPF 58% versus 25% and the FN 74% versus 9%, as if EU-scepticism implied a deliberate unwillingness to engage. A different source, focusing on RPF voters in particular, showed 57% expressing anxiety about the course of EU integration, but only 8% opposed to the EU. However, while these people can be assumed to have been concerned about national sovereignty, they comprised a mixture of long-standing EU-sceptics alongside others whose attitudes had probably crystallised in the course of the 1990s, since 41% had voted No in the Maastricht referendum but 39% said they had voted Yes. It could be suspected that their attitudes towards the EU were probably more varied and nuanced than their negative attitudes towards the US, given that 72% of them thought Europe should be independent of US. Whatever the case, this set of responses was close to the IFOP poll in the balance between the primacy assigned to domestic or to EU issues in voting motives, with 56% responding that they had voted primarily on domestic issues (especially law and order, and immigration), while 31% claimed they had voted primarily on European issues (Fourquet 1999, 2001).

It should be added here that the low salience of the EU as a voting issue has also been confirmed by the disparity of performance in EP elections and in other national elections by groupings which make the EU their most central policy area. It needs to be remembered that although presidential and parliamentary elections in France are not based on proportional representation, the two-round voting system gives considerable freedom for the expression of real preferences (and protests) in the first round, so there is scope and incentive for new parties and personalities to enter the arena if they can meet the entry conditions.

The point can be illustrated with regard to right-wing groupings. The Eurosceptical list, L=Autre Europe, led by Philippe de Villiers and Sir James Goldsmith, mainly representing dissidents from the parties of the mainstream right, had attracted some 12.3% of the national vote, while the FN list gained 10.5%. The aggregate vote for the two right-wing Eurosceptical lists was thus fairly close to the 25.6% won by the official RPR-UDF list which had campaigned on a strongly integrationist platform. Public support for the EU was substantially lower by 1995 than it had been prior to Maastricht (Cameron, 1996). Nevertheless, Europe was far from being an overriding concern in the presidential election of 1995. Furthermore, the sum of the individual scores achieved in the first round by the EU-sceptics, de Villiers (4.7%) and Le Pen (15%), was only half that of the two RPR candidates, Edouard Balladur (18.6%) and Jacques Chirac (20.8%), both of whom had campaigned in broadly positive terms on European integration, including France=s projected participation in EMU. In fact, Chirac and Balladur together won 38% of the votes of those who had voted against Maastricht in 1992 (while de Villiers and Le Pen together won 34%) and 55% of those who had voted for the L=Autre Europe list in 1994 (while de Villiers and Le Pen together won 42%). Neither de Villiers nor Le Pen was campaigning exclusively on an EU-

revisionist platform. Both offered more or less comprehensive packages of policies. However, it emphasises the fact that the EU issue was not enough to win support.

Similarly, in 1997 the content of the parliamentary election campaign was not dominated by the issue of Europe. There were certainly anti-federalist voices to be heard on the right, as well as on the left. And the link between the government=s effort to meet the convergence criteria for EMU and its failure to deliver on Chirac=s 1995 electoral promises on reducing unemployment no doubt played its part (on the policy dilemmas faced by the Chirac/Juppé government, see Cameron, 1996). But it is by no means certain that the issue of European integration, as such, made a decisive contribution to the defeat of the RPR-UDF coalition. The Eurosceptics within the RPR and the UDF were little heard and Philippe Séguin, the most powerful Gaullist voice against Maastricht in 1992, now struck a more flexible posture. Philippe de Villiers and his LDI group failed to fulfil de Villiers= promise to make Europe *the* focal issue of the election. The LDI succeeded in obtaining a score of only 2.8% of the national vote in the first round, winning only one seat after the run-offs in the second round. The FN, meanwhile, certainly used the European question, but as one among many issues on which to attack the government. Its relative success in scoring 15% in the first round of voting would suggest support for its whole anti-establishment, national populist package, including its stance on the EU, but it is difficult to disentangle that issue from different aspects such as the FN=s other policies on Anational preference@, immigration, employment or law and order.

The presidential election of 2002 presented a similarly blurred picture. In the interim since the 1999 EP election, the establishment of the RPF as a party at a time which was apparently ripe for picking up many disillusioned former supporters of the FN and MNR as well as dissidents fleeing the fragmentation and in-fighting of the mainstream right, had been undermined by the inability of Charles Pasqua and Philippe de Villiers to collaborate with each other and to unite their sets of followers into a cohesive campaigning body. Hence the effective dissolution of the party in the course of 2000, the haemorrhage of support, and the fact that Pasqua chose not to run for the presidency, with only 1-3% support according to the tracking polls, despite the fact that de Villiers was not standing. Instead, the baton of both the Gaullist and the socialist versions of what had come to be known as national republicanism passed to Chevènement. Although the MDC had to some extent sold its national republican soul in the 1999 EP election to stay in line with the PS, Chevènement's credibility as a potential presidential candidate running against both Jospin and Chirac had been restored by his resignation from his post as Minister of the Interior in August 2000 on the issue of Corsican devolution.

Chevènement was not the only EU-sceptical candidate in the presidential campaign. Interestingly, an article entitled "Tous contre l'Europe" by the Croatian journalist Natasa Rajakovic in *Libération* on 26 March commented sardonically on the fact that all of the mainstream candidates, even including François Bayrou, normally considered a maximalist, emphasised the need to protect French interests and French identity in Europe. Conversely, the other two main anti-Establishment candidates, Le Pen and Arlette Laguiller, were rejectionist partisans of a very different Europe from the EU. What was particularly striking about this was that, while Laguiller's constituency was identifiably concentrated on the extreme left and Le Pen's on the extreme right, Chevènement's straddled an extremely broad spectrum ranging across from extreme left to extreme right through all points between. Given that the MDC itself is a small organization with limited influence inside or outside the Socialist milieu (two senators, eight *députés* and two MEPs), this is a remarkable phenomenon which has reminded many

commentators of the early days of post-war Gaullism, something which Chevènement and his lieutenants were at pains to encourage. Chevènement apparently made a suitable leader, having governmental experience but having also shown his independence of mind by resigning twice from ministerial posts on grounds of disagreement with official policy. He could rightly be described as the political progenitor of the left-wing version of national republicanism but the achievement was to draw support from the right as well, notably from Gaullist followers of Séguin and of Pasqua. Indeed, during the campaign Chevènement defined himself, in effect, as a left-Gaullist, describing his own political career as having been inspired by "la certitude que pour inscrire dans la durée l'oeuvre que le général de Gaulle avait entreprise en 1940, il fallait réconcilier la Vème République et la justice sociale" (*La Croix*, 11 Nov. 2001). He added even more unequivocally: "Suivre l'inspiration gaulliste, c'est aujourd'hui relever l'Etat et le citoyen, la France et la République; c'est marier la justice social et la nation".

This reflected the fact that, at elite level at least, national republicanism had developed a network of structures and personnel which formed a core — one might almost describe it as a political sub-culture — around which other groups or individuals could congregate for the purpose of the presidential campaign and perhaps for the longer term (for general discussion of pressure groups within the overall development of organized EU-scepticism in France, see Usherwood 2002). This development had been possible precisely because national republicanism was far from being a movement created solely by politicians. It had also been supported by a significant body of ideological production by intellectuals and other activists, such as Régis Debray, Max Gallo, Claude Nicolet, Pierre-André Taguieff, Paul-Marie Couteaux, Emmanuel Todd, Jean-Claude Guillebaud, Paul Thibaud, Jean-François Kahn and Philippe Cohen. The ferment of intellectual activity was accompanied by a proliferation of clubs and think tanks established in the late 1990s to generate ideas and to provide a meeting ground between intellectuals, activists and politicians.

Despite all this, it was not Chevènement who went through to the second round but Le Pen. Having scored close to 11% in opinion polls during the pre-campaign in January and February, Chevènement only collected 5.3% in the first round. Whatever other factors played a part, this was surely revealing, not so much of the fact that Le Pen's rejectionism was more attractive than Chevènement's revisionism but that the EU remained a very minor issue in the campaign and Le Pen made a more appealing vehicle for all-purpose protest than the respectable Chevènement (on the low salience of the EU in the campaigns see Fieschi 2002; Franck 2002). Admittedly, in a CSA poll carried out on 27-28 February, two months before the election, 20% of respondents had endorsed the view that the EU should have a very important part in campaign and a further 46% thought it should be quite important (30% disagreed, RPF and FN/MNR voters the lowest commitment to campaigning on EU issues). Obviously most respondents were at least aware that it was a significant matter. However, as the time drew nearer, it was evident that public opinion did not see the EU as a key issue in comparison with a range of domestic concerns, despite the fact that under the Fifth Republic foreign policy has traditionally been the *domaine réservé* of the President. A CSA poll on 6-7 February had shown the EU ranking 10th out of 14 among priority themes, with 8% of respondents citing it. Two months later, in a Sofres poll on 10-11 April, in which respondents were allowed to name several choices, it ranked 14th out of 17 themes, with 13% of respondents citing it. Finally, in a CSA exit poll on 21 April, allowed three choices as to the issues which had counted most for them in the election, it was cited by 9% of respondents. In short, the EU continued to have low salience, though an IFOP poll on 21-22 March suggested

that support for a more intergovernmental than supranational Europe was, if anything, on the rise, since 58% claimed to favour a Europe of states, while 34% chose a federal Europe.

The EU had a negligible place in the parliamentary election campaign which followed the presidential election, and since that time the preparations for a new presidential term, for Chirac, supported by an apparently solid centre-right majority, coupled with the summer recess, have done nothing to raise the EU's salience in the public sphere. Insofar as the themes raised by pollsters include the world outside France, they have tended to relate to globalisation rather than the EU. However, as the left began the long process of self-examination after its double defeat in the two elections, a CSA poll conducted on 3-4 July could have suggested that, unsurprisingly, Europe did not figure in the eyes of most respondents as a primary plank for winning votes. When asked which values the left had defended best, EU integration ranked second. However, when asked to choose two policy themes from a list of 15 on which respondents believed the left should reflect and concentrate in the future, EU integration ranked 13th for all respondents and for supporters of the left. Asked what values the left should defend, EU integration did better, ranking 10th for all respondents and for the left-wing sub-set. It was just another blurred snapshot of opinion, but consistent with the impression given by earlier polls.

In short, although electoral EU-scepticism is by no means a mirage in France, the reality is elusive. It is obviously impossible to assess the future prospects there or in the EU as a whole with any confidence because they involve far too many national and international variables. Clearly the issue of European integration has been more salient since the early 1990s, and that is likely to continue as the process of enlargement — a divisive issue in itself — generates more pressure for reform of European institutions and policies. Still, despite the increasing influence of the EU on national governance, European issues continue to have less salience than many domestic issues and are often filtered through the lens of domestic concerns. There is some demand for representation of Eurosceptical opinions but interest is episodic and, as Jocelyn Evans (2000) has argued, the ideological divergences within that demand appear to weigh against the likelihood of long-term partisan realignment around the EU issue. In France it has been expressed in the Maastricht referendum and in EP elections but it has not had a major influence on French presidential or parliamentary elections any more than it has in other EU states. Euroscepticism has been accommodated in the multiparty system without seriously disrupting it (Evans 2001). At the same time, the divisions between and within Eurosceptical groupings limit their effectiveness: the recriminations between the Pasqua and de Villiers camps illustrated the problem. Although circumstances can always change, it is difficult to foresee circumstances in which rejectionism would gain a wider appeal. On the other hand, as the cases of Britain, Denmark and other countries illustrate, it is not impossible for the weight of Eurosceptical opinion to function as a real constraint on government policy and potentially on the operation of the EU itself, so revisionists do have something to play for.

Conclusion
This paper has used the case of France to illustrate some aspects of the problem of defining EU-scepticism and hence of estimating its significance. Since parties are the most visible bearers of scepticism and are holders of more or less clearly articulated positions, I have taken the categorisation of party positions as the starting-point. I diverge from Sczerbiak and Taggart in suggesting a different set of divisions, and although I see the logic of Kopecky and Mudde's effort to combine the strategic and the ideological levels in a single typology, I believe that ideology needs to be treated in a more differentiated way because EU-sceptical

attitudes and ideas are currently located at the outer edges of major ideologies, although they may migrate towards the cores of some variants in due course. In other words, no major ideology is necessarily EU-sceptical. Different political environments and cultures elicit different responses to EU integration from groups adhering to different versions of the same broad currents of political beliefs. With regard to public attitudes, the progress of research will undoubtedly make it possible to anatomise popular opinion on the EU with increasing refinement. At present, much of what is asserted concerning the nature and extent of EU-scepticism among national publics is based, as my own analysis was, on a patchwork of aggregated responses to questions which admit multiple interpretations. More sophisticated analyses are, of course, carried out, despite frequent caveats concerning the problems posed by the limitations of the survey data. Still, the nature and dimensions of popular EU-scepticism appear either spuriously clear or disquietingly elusive. Much the same is true of the significance of EU-scepticism as a factor contributing to voting choices. It is there, but it is not easy to evaluate.

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