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‘Another Europe is possible’ and the end of Euroscepticism? Addressing the fine-line between opposing Europe and offering a Euro-alternative

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‘Another Europe is possible’ and the end of Euroscepticism? Addressing the fine-line between opposing Europe and offering a Euro-alternative

Many theories have emerged to explain Euroscepticism and its variation in relation to the depth and focus of its opposition to European integration across different case studies (Flood and Usherwood 2007; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kopecky & Mudde 2002; Szczerbiak & Taggart 2002). While this body of work has been useful in outlining the concept, empirical evidence from public opinion data and EU referendum campaigns reveals that Euroscepticism is ostensibly far more mainstream than these theories can conceptually accommodate.

What this paper argues is that the apparent Eurosceptic actions of certain political actors should be reconsidered not a

s the rejection of European integration, but as the offering of a ‘Euroalternative’. Using evidence from the No campaigns in two EU referendums – the 2005 French EU Constitutional Treaty referendum and the 2012 Irish Fiscal Compact referendum – this paper seeks to highlight how these campaigns represent a distinct European political discourse that directly challenges existing theories of Euroscepticism. The leading protagonists in the No campaigns in these two referendums strongly contested the concept of European integration of both Treaties, but not by rejecting Europe. Rather referendum opponents sought to argue that ‘another Europe is possible’ and put forward their own proposals to take European integration in a new direction.

This paper outlines an initial typology by which the distinction between Euroscepticism and what is labelled ‘Euroalternatives’ can be delineated. It draws on the case studies of the French and Irish referendums but also includes evidence from across the EU specifically in the context of the Eurocrisis.

Opening:

The aim of this paper is to re-examine the nature of Euroscepticism following the economic and political turmoil caused by the Eurocrisis that has been in existence since 2008. The theoretical underpinnings of Euroscepticism that dominate the literature are drawn from a pre-crisis Europe where any deviance from the carefully negotiated path of European integration could be labelled as “soft Euroscepticism” (Szczurbiak & Taggart, 2004) undertaken by actors described as “Eurorealists” (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002) amongst other terms. What this paper argues is that the most recent changes in European integration, both at an institutional and policy level, have radically changed the frames by which Euroscepticism can be understood and interpreted. This is not a new phenomenon. As will be discussed, the 2005 French referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty saw the clear emergence of opposition to European integration not on the grounds of the rejection of the fundamental principles of European integration but more to the direction it was being taken. With the 2012 Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact Treaty, those actors advocating a No vote based their campaigns around alternative policies to be incorporated into a new Treaty. In both cases withdrawal from the Euro, let alone the EU was not advocated by the majority of Treaty opponents. This evolution of opposition to European integration has been greatly accentuated by the Eurocrisis and understanding why it represents an important shift in the dynamic of opposition to European integration is important element of the paper.

This paper firstly discusses why the theoretical underpinnings of Euroscepticism need to change and what the emergence of political choice (however limited) at the European level means. It then goes on to articulate why the Eurocrisis has facilitated the development of, what is termed, ‘Euroalternativism’. A basic typology is then developed that facilitates the parsing of Euroalternativism from Euroscepticism. The differences are ostensibly subtle but using the framework outlined in this paper substantial variances are located that can provide insight into the rapidly changing European political discourse. Finally, the examples of the 2005 French vote on the European Constitutional Treaty and the 2012 Irish vote on the Fiscal Compact are discussed in-depth as critical examples of the Euroalternativism.

Euroscepticism and Political Opposition

Though many special editions of academic journals have been devoted¹ to the study of Euroscepticism in many forms from parties, to public opinion, to civil society; there is general consensus as to the “problematic” (Flood & Usherwood, 2007) nature of the concept. The most important attempts to formulate typologies for understanding Euroscepticism (Hooghe & Marks, 2008; Kopecky & Mudde, 2002; Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2004) have been grounded in an interpretation of opposition to European integration as a negative and its central premise as the rejection of membership of the EU. Where they differ is in their interpretation of the rationale for that rejection – as for example the GAL-TAN ideological approach of Hooghe and Marks, and the party family centric analysis of Kopecky and Mudde. These arguments are then wrapped up in the hard/soft Euroscepticism approach of Szczerbiak and Taggart (2004), with ‘hard’ ideologies/party families advocating withdrawal and ‘soft’ ideologies/party families pushing opposition to specific policies that clash with their interests.

Given the ephemeral nature of Euroscepticism these approaches have worked extremely well in providing the intellectual foundations for investigating one of the most important European political phenomena of recent times. But these approaches were formulated at a time when opponents of European integration offered little in the way of policy alternatives, outside of withdrawal and non-implementation of EU policies. This reflected the political and institutional reality of the consociational system of EU decision making. European policy was formulated in such a long drawn out and major stake-holder inclusive process that lone voices calling for change were limited to demands to halt European integration or to withdraw their state entirely from EU membership. These voices could not be accommodated in a process that was ostensibly inclusive and representative of the European political and social mainstream. All dissenting actors were therefore labelled as Eurosceptics and outside of the EU system, as that was the only space where opposition to European integration could take place.

Opposition in the EU has not had the natural institutionalized outlet that is expected of all liberal democracies. Hix, Raunio and Scully (2003) have been at the forefront in arguing that the emergence of the European Parliament as a relevant actor has created some form of an outlet for institutionalized opposition to the European Commission and Council. The

¹ See in particular special editions of *West European Politics* 2004; *Acta Politica* 2007 and *Journal of Common Market Studies* 2013

Europe of Freedom and Democracy group, the Conservatives and Reformist group, and the GUE/NGL group have all emerged as a form, however incoherent, of opposition. But again they appear as outsiders to the European mainstream. Their Euroscepticism is exotic and reinforces the view of contestation of the EU as exceptional and confined to the extremities of the political system (Ray, 2007). Moreover, in the European Parliamentary itself Helms (2008) argues that the ‘Grand Coalition’ of the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals has prevented the Eurosceptic Europarties from expressing effective opposition. Aside from a handful of isolated examples such as the Santer Commission resignation and the significant amendments to the Bolkstein Directive, the European Parliament mirrors the pro-European mainstream.

Political competition is therefore still in its nascent stage at the European level. Both Hix (2008) and Mair (2007) have made compelling arguments that this failure of political competition to develop at the EU level has been a key driver of declining public support for European integration. The European public is simply not presented with policy options at the European level that they have the opportunity to choose in a democratic process. European Parliamentary elections offer little in the way of policy differentiation. As Van Der Eijk et al (1996) have shown voters are participating less and less in European elections because there is nothing at stake. Those parties that do offer a policy at European elections, Eurosceptics, offer the only alternative available – withdrawal or at least greatly reduced participation.

Referendums on EU related issues do not provide an avenue for political competition either (Binzer Hobolt & Brouard, 2010). What is presented to voters is essentially a fait accompli. European political elites have negotiated them and have been forced through a variety of forced circumstances or political naivety into holding a referendum, not in the interests of increasing democratic accountability (Morel, 2007). The only option for voters in EU related referendums is a simple Yes or No. But in reality only support for the Treaty is accommodated, opposition to the Treaty is construed as rejection of the basic principles of European integration. When they do choose to vote No then they are not given an alternative Treaty. The Dutch and French No votes meant the end of the Constitutional Treaty and its reincarnation as the Lisbon Treaty which was not put to a vote in either country. Irish voters were presented with the same Treaties, though with a handful of legal guarantees on specific issues, after they rejected both the Nice and Lisbon Treaties at referendums in 2001 and 2008 respectively. Denmark in the early 1990s provides the one example of an alternative EU policy put before citizens, in the shape of the Edinburgh Compromise, after the No to Maastricht in 1992 (Buch & Hansen, 2002).

Euroscepticism is therefore not the politics of alternatives because opposition to the EU has not had the opportunity to put forward any alternative paths for European integration to take aside from withdrawal from the entire process altogether. The EU political system as it was constructed in the past negated the development of policies that diverged from the European mainstream. How could an actor oppose a system that was carefully designed to bring so many stakeholders into the decision making process? The only option therefore for opposition was a fundamental rejection of the basic principles of European integration. In the early period of European integration as the institutions were being constructed and their policy competencies expanded, Euroscepticism was dismissed as wanting to bring Europe back to the pre-war period of hyper nationalism and economic protectionism. With such a narrow range of policy competencies the central basis of Euroscepticism was rejection of the founding principles of European integration itself – ever-closer cooperation between the countries of Europe (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002). But as the evolution of EU authority over an increasing numbers of policy areas affected more political actors ever greater levels of Euroscepticism were generated (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This Euroscepticism was concentrated in the extremities of the political system, principally on the radical left who rejected the single market and the nationalist right who opposed the sustained loss of national sovereignty.

Existing analyses of Euroscepticism explain its pre-crisis basis but if opposition to European integration is meant to be confined to the extremities of the political system then why has there been a perceptible increase in public opinion, electoral results and member state actions since 2008 (Usherwood & Startin, 2013)? This is because the specific nature of the Eurocrisis has expanded the range of EU critical voices to include those from the pro-European political mainstream. The next section explores the Eurocrisis and how it has caused the breakdown of the EU's consociational decision making process, facilitating the emergence of political competition at the EU level in what appears to be an increase in Euroscepticism.

This time is different: the Eurocrisis and the emergence of Euroalternatives

Vasilopoulou (2013) in her state-of-the-art analysis of the study of Euroscepticism points to the emergence of what she labels “elite Euroscepticism”. Postulating on future directions of European integration she references the emergence of dissent at the highest levels of European politics as evidence of the potential mainstreaming of Euroscepticism as a consequence of the economic and political failures to deal with the Eurocrisis.

It is the premise of this paper that the concept of Euroscepticism needs to evolve along with the highly significant changes in the European project that have been undertaken in the wake of the Eurocrisis. What Vasilopoulou highlights as the potential mainstreaming of Euroscepticism this paper argues can be more correctly labelled as a form of 'Euroalternativism'. The preceding paragraphs have highlighted two important elements of Euroscepticism. Firstly, that it is rejectionist, in that the fundamental tenets of European integration are considered unsuitable for the state in question or incompatible with the actors world view or at the very minimum what Mair (2007) termed "pro-system opposition", as in here European integration ends with no further deepening. Secondly, these are the only defacto positions available to actors to contest European integration as there is no institutional political arena in which alternative policies can be effectively expressed or even accommodated. This has prevented the emergence of political competition at the European level and effectively stifled public debate on the EU.

While there is no doubting the great human suffering the Eurocrisis has caused, from a policy process perspective a fundamental consequence of the Eurocrisis is that it has opened up the EU policy making process to wide-spread debate over the form that both EU policy and institutional development should take. The European Commission has been the focus of this contestation as it has become the centripetal force coercing the member states into following the agreed plan to solve the Eurocrisis. Its policy proposals and actions have come under stringent criticism from actors who would have been perceived as staunchly pro-European before the Eurocrisis (Ray 2007). National political leaders have been open in their criticism of EU policy towards the financial crisis – from attacking it as an "Anglo-Saxon assault on the [French] nation" (French President Francois Hollande to European Commission President Barroso: LePont, 2013) to warning of the potential of so-called austerity policies to destroy popular support for European integration (Irish President Michael D. Higgins in an address to the European Parliament: Bintliff, 2013). Furthermore Dutch Finance Minister and President of the Eurogroup Jerome Dijsselbloem has called for radical reforms of the Eurozone and if they cannot be achieved for its swift disbanding (Wishart, 2013); Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has made several official statements requesting the development of Eurobonds as a means to solve the sovereign debt crisis (El Mundo, 2011) while leading Greek politicians and civil society figures have called for an EU wide fiscal stimulus financed by the European Central Bank (ECB) to deal with high levels of unemployment as an addendum to 'austerity' policies (Chen, 2012). Countering these policy proposals German politicians, media commentators and high-ranking economic officials have

denounced them and the actions of the ECB and Commission as over reach beyond the existing EU treaties and German constitution (Peel, 2010). Pan-European actors such as the Party of European Socialists Group in the European Parliament have put forward the European Youth Guarantee as their policy platform for the 2014 European Parliament elections (Party of European Socialists, 2013). The necessity of democratic reform of the EU in the wake of the reforms undertaken has been made by Jürgen Habermas (2012) and former Irish Prime Minister and EU ambassador to the US John Bruton (2012).

In his insightful 2007 analysis of the lack of political opposition at the European level, Mair highlighted the specific lack of an arena to organize opposition to the existing system. What is perhaps most fascinating about the current debate over how the EU should deal with the Eurocrisis is that it has not taken place solely in a specifically created institutional arena. Speeches before the European Parliament, media briefings before and after EU Council meetings, and newspaper opinion pages amongst others have all served as the arena within which Euroalternativism has emerged. This is perhaps the start of the development of a European political sphere along Habermasian lines of cosmopolitanism. *Table 1* below lists out a few of the examples of the Euroalternativist positions discussed.

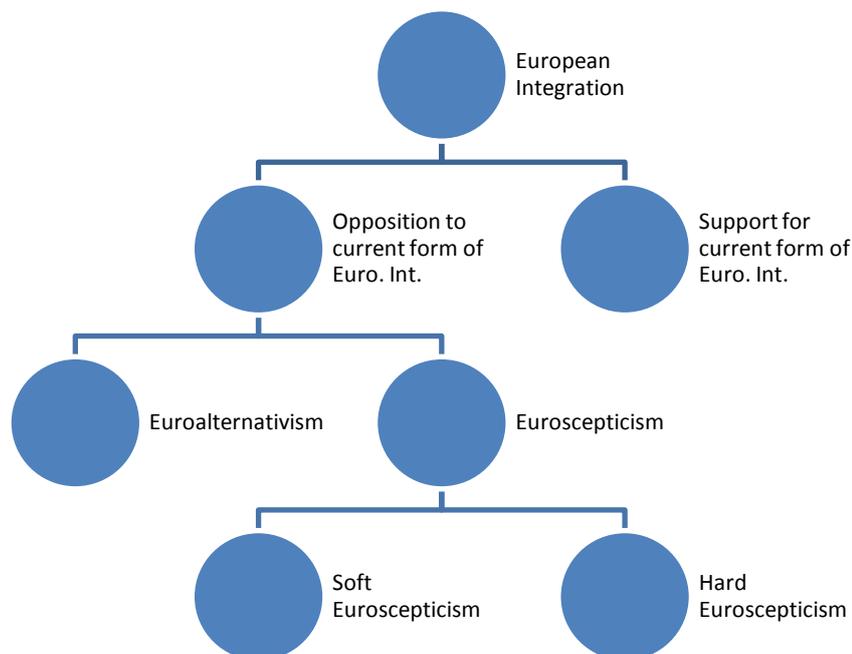
Table 1: Breakdown of Euroalternativism by Actor, Alternative Policy advocated and Arena in which policy was put forward

Actor	Alternative Policy	Arena
Irish President	Social Policy	Speech to European Parliament
Spanish Prime Minister	Eurobonds	Speech to European Parliament
Jürgen Habermas et al	Direct Election of European Commission President/Deeper European Integration	Opinion editorial in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Guardian
Greek Prime Minister	EU wide fiscal stimulus	Pre-European Council press conference
George Soros	German withdrawal from the Euro	Opinion editorial in major international newspapers: New York Review of Books, Guardian, Financial Times
Party of European Socialists	European Youth Guarantee	European Parliament/national political debates
Redefine Europe	IMF plan to reform EU	Financial Times Opinion Editorial
Hans Werner Sinn	Exit and Re-entry from Eurozone	Financial Times Opinion Editorial

What links the actors listed in *Table 1* is their confirmed support for the EU institutions as they stand and the basic principles of European integration and the EU project. To label their actions in opposing EU policies as Eurosceptic is incongruous with the fundamental pro-European sentiment of the actors in question. The hypotheses of Euroalternativism allows for the rationalisation of this opposition to EU policy with support for the EU system. In turn what has facilitated this metamorphosis of Euroscepticism into Euroalternativism is the inability of the existing EU decision-making structure to adequately

deal with the Eurocrisis. Ultimately this has created a spontaneous European political arena of opposition to existing EU policies but one that offers alternatives to those policies, a clear difference to Euroscepticism which *Chart 1* below shows. This is not to say that the entire concept of Euroscepticism has been rendered obsolete by the Eurocrisis. Rather it is argued that Euroalternativism is a different form of opposition to European integration than Euroscepticism, one that is firmly based in the political environment created by the Eurocrisis.

Chart 1. Position of Euroalternativism Relative to Euroscepticism and Support for Current form of European Integration



But what is different about the Eurocrisis that has facilitated the emergence of a Euroalternativist discourse? European integration has experienced several similar occasions of profound crisis that has precipitated debate over the future of European integration. The empty chair crisis of the late 1960s, the ‘Eurosclerosis’ period of the 1970s and early 1980s, the Danish No to the Maastricht Treaty and the scrapping of the EU Constitutional Treaty after the Dutch and French No votes, were all important events in the development of opposition to European integration. Mény (2012) points out that the EU has survived these crises, with the outcome being systemic changes that have enabled deeper integration. From

this perspective the Eurocrisis is just another in the series of hurdles that the EU has faced, and overcome, in the past. Crum (2013) and de Wilde and Zurn (2012) have both argued, however, that what differentiates the Eurocrisis from previous times of EU instability is that the EU has moved firmly into the economic and fiscal management of member states and that these policies are having a direct, frequently negative, impact on citizens who are keenly aware of their EU origin.

Mény (2012) believes that the crux of 20th century politics has been a debate over the regulation of the economy. As this power has shifted to the European level, domestic politics has not adapted and the development of a European democratic space has been stunted. Alternative options to Commission proposals once the policy process has been launched are “practically non-existent” (Mény, 2012). This is further complicated by the fact that though “the EU has been granted a quasi-monopoly to regulate economic activities” it “is not directly engaged with the expected or unexpected consequences of its regulatory powers. It is the role of national governments to face these consequences and to cope with them”. Moreover the “market regulation ... procedures are so complex and inflexible that the institutions and their policies are trapped in an inextricable web”. The Fiscal Compact Treaty has formalised this direct involvement in the day to day running of states. As the Commission has become the enforcer of the strict economic and fiscal rules of the Treaty it has become the focus of opposition to what has been termed ‘austerity’ policies².

What has been lacking from this sustained expansion of the EU into the economic and fiscal competencies of certain member states has been reciprocal democratic accountability in the European institutions (Crum, 2013). The pressures of dealing with the Eurocrisis have accentuated this democratic deficit by stretching the EU decision making process to breaking point. In place of a specific executive leadership the European Council has become the decision maker of last resort. Forced to address the immediacy of the Eurocrisis bi-annual meetings and carefully negotiated consensus has been replaced by a stream of emergency summits and pre-negotiated deals between the big member states. Those political actors outside of the large member states and Commission have found themselves to be largely cut out of this new crisis policy making process and unable to exert influence over economic and fiscal policy which is directly affecting their citizens. As events overtake them the only option of these actors (*Table 1*) is to voice opposition to agreed EU policy and to call for alternative policies that they believe will address the issues of the Eurocrisis. This

² Pollack traces the EU drive for “fiscal austerity” as far back as the mid 1990s to German to “German donor fatigue” at the costs of reunification and potential costs of Eastern Enlargement (Pollack, 2000; 527).

contestation is different from that which is expressed internally in the formal policy formation process. In this process, as Brack (2013) has shown, there is vigorous debate and strong opposition. But once the policy is agreed and voted on that opposition ends and demands for changes or challenges to the policy vigorously attacked as Eurosceptic. Euroalternativism is different from internal debates in the EU policy formation process in that it is based on the contestation of already agreed EU policy.

As the Eurocrisis has continued, European citizens have come to understand that their national political actors are powerless to change EU policy once it has been agreed. This has caused them to signal their dissatisfaction with the EU through negative public opinion and votes for Eurosceptic parties as they have no other means of expressing their opposition to EU policies that does not involve support for a party or other actor that is bound up in the ‘austerity’ process. Once the policy has been agreed at the EU level citizens have no direct feedback loop to the Commission. Their only recourse is to pressurize their national policy actors to voice their opposition at the European level. *Table 1* shows a preponderance of left-wing and policy actors from member states who have been disproportionately negatively affected by the Eurocrisis who have argued for Euroalternativist policies. The main substance of this opposition is the proposal of alternative policies for EU economic and fiscal policy.

The actors in *Table 1* make explicit reference to the suffering of the people but also to their support for the EU project and their state’s continued participation. But they argue the policies must change if *public* support for integration is to be maintained. The Greek Prime Minister Samaras has argued for an increase in the time allowed for Greece to reduce its budget deficit under the 3% threshold legally required by the Fiscal Compact Treaty. This would be in clear violation of the Fiscal Compact Treaty, but can it be interpreted as a Eurosceptic action? Greece has seen the electoral rise of the radical left SYRIZA and the neo-fascist Golden Dawn; both on strongly Eurosceptic policy platforms. These two parties have garnered such levels of support from the public’s perception of the negative impacts of EU policy in Greece. These impacts have had such an explicit effect on Greece that the Greek Prime Minister has been forced to communicate the Greek public’s opposition to them and try to negotiate a changed policy for Greece. Indeed the Greek Prime Minister is most likely playing to public opinion but he is doing so from a pro-European position. In essence his Euroalternativist proposals can be interpreted as part of a feedback loop between Greek citizens and the EU level. Greek citizens are fully aware of the direct impact of these EU

policies on their daily lives and are demanding that their representatives at the EU level contest them.

Bartolini (2008) has argued that such contestation cannot be tolerated for once it enters the European political space then the entire EU consociational system breaks down and becomes politicized. This would change the fundamental character of EU integration away from consensus to competition and lead to institutionalised Euroscepticism and an increased prospect of withdrawal by member states. In challenging this argument Hix (2008) has pointed out that such competition has become inevitable with the growing involvement of the EU in the day-to-day affairs of member states. Where Bartolini sees this as a negative, Hix views it as a positive development that can help reengage citizens in the European integration process by offering them policy alternatives at the EU level. The obvious follow on question is how to disaggregate Bartolini's concern of politicization leading to increased Euroscepticism and the ultimate breakup of the EU from Hix's belief in political competition being a positive for the EU. The next section offers a method for systematically analysing Euroalternativism as a distinct political phenomenon from Euroscepticism.

Proposal for a Method of Analysis for Euroalternativism

This paper's proposed method for analysing Euroalternativism builds on Dahl's (1966) threefold classification of political opposition. He described as classic opposition that which is directed at the policies of the government; opposition of principle is directed against the system, while elimination of opposition is when opposition is directed only against the personnel of government (Mair, 2007). Reformatting this approach for the purposes of this paper produces the following method of analysis. Firstly, classic opposition is adapted to become 1.) offering policy alternatives. Secondly, opposition of principle can be changed to 2.) support for existing institutional structures of EU. Thirdly, elimination of opposition can be reinterpreted as 3.) opposition to the fundamental principles of European integration. This specific interpretation is made as when competition on policy or principle is not allowed then the next step is to challenge the actors who drive the system of government. In the case of the EU this paper proposes that it is the federalists and the vision of the founding fathers of European integration to promote ever close union between the peoples of Europe. Finally, for the purposes of this study the variable of support for withdrawal from the EU is added. This is perhaps the most pure expression of Euroscepticism – the advocacy of removing one's state from the EU. An actor may put forward policy alternatives to the CAP or the CFP for example and not be considered Euroalternativist but Eurosceptic as their primary goal is not

just policy change at the EU level but ultimately national withdrawal from the EU. Kircheimer (1957) in his study of opposition argues that the ultimate act of opposition is to destroy the system that refuses to accommodate opposition, through revolution. For those that oppose European integration what could be a more revolutionary act than to 4.) seek withdraw from the EU.

Expressing Dahl's classification of opposition for the purposes of discerning Euroalternativism from Euroscepticism leaves us with the following classification.

Euroalternativism differs from Euroscepticism in that it:

1. Possesses alternative policies for European integration.
2. Supports the existing institutional structure of the EU.
3. Supports the fundamental tenets of the European project – ever-closer cooperation between the countries of Europe through a supranational structure of governance.
4. Does not seek withdrawal from the EU.

Possesses Alternative Policies for European Integration

As the previous section on Euroscepticism discussed, the politics of Euroscepticism was one of rejection. Creating and advocating policy alternatives emphasises the difference between actors who hold genuine ideologically opposition to European integration and those who are constrained by the lack of outlets for policy alternatives to the existing EU mainstream. In their analysis of UKIP Lynch and Whitaker (2012) show that the party has not developed any EU policy beyond withdrawal while even that policy is predicated on a vague assertion that the UK can negotiate a relationship on similar terms to that of Norway and Switzerland. Similarly the literature on populist parties and Euroscepticism (Fitzgibbon & Guerra, 2010) finds that beyond withdrawal from the EU itself or certain EU policies, there is nothing in the way of policy alternatives that they propose. This can be contrasted to the present situation discussed in the last section where various actors have criticised EU policy but have explicitly stated policy alternatives that they believe the EU should pursue.

Supports the Existing EU Institutional Structure

Whereas those that advocate withdrawal from the EU and argue against the benefits of a supranational governance structure can be clearly identified as Eurosceptic, there are many actors who accept the necessity of some form of European integration but only of a limited form. Usherwood (2007) has detailed the arguments of Eurosceptics in the UK and France

who both argue for a form of pre-Maastricht Europe that focuses power in the Council and away from the Commission and Parliament. More recently German activists have come out strongly against the Commission and ECB and have called for more power to the Council as a means of curtailing the power of institutions that they perceive to be too European (Alternativ Für Deutschland, 2013). Eurosceptics who support some form of European integration argue for the Council, and hence member state not European interests, to retain the power in the EU political system. Euroalternativists on the other hand either do not make reference to changes to the EU's institutional structure or advocate for more policy competency to the more 'European' focused institutions, namely the ECB and Parliament, and hence deeper integration.

Support for Fundamental Tenets of European Integration

At the most basic level do actors who criticise current EU policy explicitly support the cooperation of European countries through a supranational process. Both UKIP leader Nigel Farage and Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras have spoken of the futility of EU 'austerity' policies in solving the Eurocrisis. Prime Minister Samaras, however, has maintained the commitment of the Greek government toward continued membership of the EU and to deeper participation in European integration. UKIP and their European Parliament Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group argue of the incompatibility of national sovereignty and the democratic will of the people with the EU supranational system of governance and so reject European integration.

Seek Withdrawal from the EU

Drawn from the 'hard' Euroscepticism thesis of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2006), this variable is an unambiguous indicator of Euroscepticism. This variable allows for a further analysis to be made of those actors who have moved from being Eurosceptic toward Euroalternativism. The Irish party Sinn Féin provide a concise example of this evolution. Up until the Nice Treaty their party position was one of withdrawal. As Irish public support for EU membership continued to remain strong and the party grew in electoral strength they removed their opposition to membership and instead began to call for a reformed EU, initially with radically changed institutions but more recently with a specific focus on radical policy change against austerity (McDonald Interview, 2012).

As the literature on opposition and European integration discussed, Euroscepticism was the default position for all opposition to the EU as there was no space for any alternative policies to be proposed. In the context of the Eurocrisis the rapid evolution of powers to the EU institutions has been important in the creation of such a space. This has allowed the use of support for the EU institutions to become a key differentiator between Euroalternativism and Euroscepticism. With the Fiscal Compact Treaty the Commission has been given direct competency over the fiscal management of EMU member states. Given the success of the centre right in recent European and national elections the policies agreed by the EU and being enforced by the Commission are perceived as being too pro-market. Political actors who oppose these policies, mainly though not exclusively on the left, now have the opportunity to argue that these European policies should be changed and alternative policies pursued through the EU institutions to deal with the immediate problems caused by the Eurocrisis.

It is this opposition to current EU policy but support for the EU institutions that is the critical signifier of Euroalternativism. Eurosceptic actors such as UKIP or the People's Movement No to the EU of Denmark offer policy alternatives to what European integration is pursuing. The key difference between them and the Greek Prime Minister for example, is that he supports the pursuance of these policies through the existing EU institutional structure, whereas UKIP or the People's Movement argue for the radical restructuring of the EU and the scrapping of the majority of its institutions. This is not to say that the proposed concept of Euroalternativism renders the literature on Euroscepticism invalid. Rather it argues that due to the unfurling events of the Eurocrisis a clear division has emerged between those that oppose European integration to change its policies and those that want to withdraw.

To further illustrate this difference, the paper will use the illustrative examples of the French and Irish No campaigns in the European Constitutional Treaty and Fiscal Compact Treaty referendums respectively. These two examples are used because they reveal that while leading political actors have been putting forward alternative policy proposals for European integration for some time, as in France in the 2005, the Eurocrisis has clarified the emergence of pro-system opposition to the EU due to fundamental disagreements over how best to solve it as the Irish Fiscal Compact Treaty referendum debate shows.

The French Vote on the European Constitutional Treaty

The immediate aftermath of the French No to the European Constitutional Treaty has been highlighted as the trigger for the mainstreaming of Euroscepticism (Taggart, 2006).

That one-half of the supposed ‘engine’ of European integration would actively oppose its further extension was taken to mean the end of the period of “permissive consensus” towards deeper integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Compounding the referendum No vote was the fact that the Treaty itself was designed to bring the EU closer to its citizens with the Convention on the Future of the European Union that drafted the Treaty meant to be a unique process that would give citizens a central role in the drafting of the European Constitution.

Academic studies that have focused on the campaign against the Treaty, however, have collectively come up with a more nuanced analysis of the reasons for its rejection. Aside from the explicit second order nature of much of the No campaign (based on opposition to the government of Conservative President Jacques Chirac and not on any ostensible EU related issues) many studies, (B. Crum, 2007; Crespy, 2008; Dufour, 2010; Marthaler, 2005; amongst others) have found that there was a distinct element of “yes to Europe, no to this” (Marthaler, 2005) from No campaigners.

Crespy (2008) and Crum (2007) both discuss the difficulties the Socialist Party had in reconciling their default pro-European position with their interpretation of the Treaty as possessing overtly neo-liberal values. While several high ranking party officials advocated support for the Treaty based on their strong pro-European convictions (Lionel Jospin, Martine Aubery, Jacques Delors), many others refused to come out either in support or against the Treaty while several leading figures, principally Laurent Fabius and Jean-Luc Melenchon, campaigned vigorously against what they say as a betrayal of the social values that they believed European integration should represent.

Ostensibly the actions of these Socialist Party officials who campaigned against the Constitutional Treaty appear to be clearly Eurosceptic. Using the Euroalternativist means of analysis outlined in the previous section a different picture emerges. As Crum (2007) points out these officials, most prominently Laurent Fabius, put forward their alternative proposals for a Constitution based on the preservation of European social values and the guarantee of certain social protections such and specific guarantees for French industries. This advocacy of an alternative to the Constitution can be contrasted to the campaigns of the Front National and the trade union CGT. Both strongly opposed the Constitutional Treaty but did not offer alternative proposals to the Treaty, instead they argued that the entire EU project should be changed to give greater power to each state and to a redesigned European system based on workers’ rights respectively.

The actions of Fabius and others were described at the time as Eurosceptic, yet it is clear that from a Euroalternativist perspective he was campaigning for different policies, not

against EU integration or the EU institutions. The actors listed in *Table 2* below were competing with the EU for the support of the public on their policy choice for the EU. The crucial difference between these actions and the present European political situation is their policies had no chance of being enacted. Nevertheless the existence of opposition to European integration based on alternative policies and not just withdrawal is obvious in the French Constitutional Treaty referendum.

Table 2: List of Actors and Positions Taken in the 2005 French European Constitutional Treaty Referendum Campaign

	Support Euro. Int. Y/N	Support Existing Institutions Y/N	Offered Alternative Policies	Advocated EU withdrawal
Socialist Party Faction ‘Social Republic’	Y	Y	Y	N
Socialist Party Faction ‘New World’		Y	Y	N
Front National	N	Y	N	Y
Workers’ Struggle	N	N	Y	Y
‘New Gaulists’	Y	Y	Y	N
Socialist Party Faction ‘New Socialist Party’	Y	Y	Y	N
MPF – Philippe De Villiers	N	N	Y	Y
CPNT	N	N	N	Y
Parti Communiste	N	N	Y	Y

The Irish Fiscal Compact Treaty

FitzGibbon (2013) has conducted the only scholarly study of the Irish Fiscal Compact Treaty. This is unfortunate as the Fiscal Compact Treaty referendum in Ireland provides a fascinating case study of a European referendum dominated by the fundamental issues of the Eurocrisis. As *Table 3* shows the majority of No campaigners proposed alternative policies that called for the scrapping of the Fiscal Compact Treaty and the drafting of a pro-growth Treaty. Such an alternative Treaty explicitly rejected austerity policies and instead emphasized Keynesian economics to promote growth and solve the Europe-wide employment crisis. Of the few right-wing groups, Libertas, argued for the supranationalisation of Irish bank debt via a new Treaty creating EU banking supervisory and management mechanisms. None of the main opponents of the Treaty advocated leaving the EU, and few argued for exiting the Euro. Rather the general emphasis was on a dramatic change of direction for the EU away from existing policies of austerity. With the Fiscal Compact Treaty being an inter-state agreement and not an official Treaty of the EU, Ireland did not hold a veto over ratification of the entire process. This situation, coupled with their trenchant criticism of existing policies, forced the No side to provide an alternative to the policies advocated in the Treaty. With EU and Euro membership receiving strong support from Irish voters (62% of Irish voters have a positive view of the EU: Flash Eurobarometer 2012), No campaigners had to articulate what their concept of a future path for European integration looked like.

While ‘second-order’ issues were pervasive throughout the referendum campaign it was the Eurocrisis and what policies were best to solve it which dominated the campaign. The debate did not accommodate those actors advocating a simple rejection of the Treaty as this position argued that the present situation was acceptable. The immediacy and direct impact of the Eurocrisis forced both sides to provide solutions to solve it.

Table 3: List of Actors and Positions Taken in the 2012 Irish Fiscal Compact Treaty Referendum Campaign

	Support Euro. Int. Y/N	Support Existing Institutions Y/N	Offered Alternative Policies	Advocated EU withdrawal
Sinn Féin	Y	Y	Y	N
Socialist Party	Y	N	Y	N
Libertas	Y	Y	Y	N
ULA	N	N	Y	N
Coir	N	N	N	N

These two case studies were discussed to evidence how opposition to European integration can take the form of contestation based around offering alternative policies, Euroalternativism, and not just on rejection of European integration or the demand for withdrawal, Euroscepticism. Moreover the French case study shows how pro-system opposition in the context of European integration is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the breakdown of the EU's policy making process in its rush to deal with the Eurocrisis. This has created a space for pro-European actors who have been cut out of the policy response to the Eurocrisis to contest that policy and put forward policy alternatives into an emerging European political sphere.

Conclusion: beyond Euroscepticism and to pro-system opposition?

This paper has argued that the concept of Euroscepticism needs to be re-theorized to accommodate the significant impact of the Eurocrisis on European integration. Principally this means taking into account the new possibility for policy competition at the European level. Up to this point there has been limited politicisation of the European issue as those actors that sought to challenge EU policies did not have the option of offering policy alternatives. As EU policy is formulated by major stakeholders in a lengthy multi-stage process, dissenting voices that emerge once the policy is enacted are actively excluded as there is no means by which they can enact their policy alternatives.

What the Eurocrisis has opened up is a political space at the EU level for pro-European integration opposition to the policies enacted to deal with it. *Table 1* listed out the many actors, from national executives, leading intellectuals, pan-European parties to think tanks, who have criticised existing EU responses to the Eurocrisis and put forward their alternatives. The sheer pervasive nature of the debate over the best approach for the EU to solve the Eurocrisis has fostered an environment of political competition for the first time at the European level. The immediate need to solve the sovereign economic crisis and high unemployment rates has seen the EU empowered through the Fiscal Compact Treaty to become directly involved in the economic and fiscal affairs of member states. The Eurocrisis has created a critical mass of ideological conflict over the economic and social efficacy of EU economic and fiscal policies and the direct impact of these policies on citizens necessary to create spontaneous political competition at the EU level.

Admittedly this paper presents a rough sketch of the concept of Euroalternativism. It discusses only two cases in brief but uses them to develop a useful framework for disaggregating Euroscepticism from the pro-system opposition, Euroalternativism, that has increased in the Eurocrisis period. Indeed this is the paper's most fundamental point, that opposition to European integration should be contextualised by the European political environment in which it is expressed. The Euroalternativism hypothesis, therefore, may only be a stepping stone toward the development of full political competition at the EU level. In a post-crisis Europe the development of fully accountable democratic institutions where political actors compete on policy may become established would render the concept of Euroalternativism irrelevant. Until that development, Euroalternativism provides a potentially useful means of disentangling and clarifying the complex EU political environment of the present.

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