Let's Discuss This Later:
Party Responses to Euro-Division in Scandinavia

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INTRODUCTION[*]

The Scandinavian countries have often been characterized as 'reluctant Europeans' (Miljan 1977). They all declined to participate in the European Communities in the 1950s. When, in the early 1970s, they faced the issue again, Sweden demurred, Denmark joined after a hard-fought referendum, and the Norwegian government, having agreed its terms of membership, had them rejected by its electorate in a still more closely contested referendum. Events in the 1990s have cemented the Scandinavian reputation. The Danes nearly derailed the Treaty on European Union when they initially voted in 1992 against ratifying it. In more close referendums in 1994, Swedes voted to join what was by then the European Union, but Norwegians repeated their No to membership. Denmark and Sweden stood aside when 11 EU members adopted a single currency at the beginning of 1999. Denmark's vote in September 2000 on late entry to the system resulted in yet another No.

Quite why European integration has caused so many political problems in Scandinavia is the subject of considerable debate (eg, Ingebritsen 1998, Jahn 1999, Kite 1996, Lawler 1997, Todal Jenssen et al. 1995). But the parties represented in the parliaments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden have been at the sharp end. The aim of this article is not to explain the patterns of Scandinavian parties' orientations towards European integration, nor why it has divided some. Fascinating questions though these are, the dependent variables that would be used in their investigation – respectively, party positions vis-à-vis integration, and degrees of internal division over those positions – are here treated as given. Instead, the research question concerns the ways in which parties have responded to the internal division that European integration has caused them. At this stage, no particular hypothesis is being tested. Rather, the article constitutes a largely inductive exercise in assessing the divisive impact of Europe on certain Scandinavian parties, and examining their varying responses. Division is, of course, a relative term; but here it is defined according to two criteria. First, it is conceived as a party leadership's failure, on a significant issue of European policy, to be reasonably sure of carrying a majority of the party's supporters, members, executive organs, congress or MPs. Second, the opposition to the leadership's line must be more or less organized, whether as a durable party 'faction', a lingering 'tendency' or an ephemeral 'issue-group' (Hine 1982: 39). The article's objective is essentially to generate hypotheses about the nature of these responses, which could then be the basis of further research.

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The units of analysis are the party leaderships, defined, for the sake of clarity, as their executive committees.[1] Parties have different goals, usually identified as holding government office, implementing policy preferences, winning votes, and maintaining party unity (eg, Harmel and Janda 1994, Müller and Strøm 1999). A workable generalization is that, while all goals will be shared to some extent by all sections of the party, those highest up the chain of authority will tend to prioritize office holding, and (often) therefore vote-maximization, and (often) therefore party unity (divided parties being unattractive to voters). Grass-roots members and activists, meanwhile, will tend to prioritize the implementation of their preferred public policies (Strom 1990). These four goals are pursued in at least three distinct arenas: the parliamentary arena, with other parties' parliamentary groups; the electoral arena, with other parties' campaigning tools and media profiles; and the intra-party arena, in which different levels of the party (national leadership, party bureaucrats, local and regional elites, activists, rank-and-file members, affiliated organisations) jostle to have their order of priorities adopted as the party's official line (Sjöblom 1968). Importantly, these arenas are 'nested' in each other: a party's behaviour in one will affect its behaviour in another (Tsebelis 1990). In Scandinavia, the European issue has complicated the party leaderships' attempts to frame goal-attaining strategies in each of the arenas. The main argument in this article is that the leaderships have responded by trying to compartmentalize these arenas, and to quarantine Europe within certain sections.

The following section assesses the impact of the European issue in two of these arenas, the electoral and the intra-party. The parties whose lives have been most disrupted are identified. In the section after that, the strategies that parties have employed in order to mitigate the damage are analyzed. Here, the focus is on the three social democratic parties in the region: Denmark's Social Democracy (SD), the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA) and the Swedish Social Democrats (SAP). The focus is narrowed in this way, first, because of the comparability of the three cases; second, because their frequent status as governing parties has often made their positions on EU-related issues especially important; and, third, because it permits a richer exploration of individual strategy-formulation than would otherwise be possible in a journal article. In the final, concluding section, the strategies used by the parties are summarized, hypotheses that might inform further research are specified, and, more speculatively, some of the possible longer-term consequences of these strategies are discussed.

THE DIVISIVE IMPACT OF EUROPE

Parties and their supporters

The break-up of the classic Scandinavian five-party system – from left to right, communist, social democratic, agrarian, liberal and conservative – had several causes. But, *pace* Mair's observation that the EU has had little ostensible effect on the format of West European party systems (2000: 30-1), the advent of the European issue does seem to have been an indirect factor, especially in Denmark and Norway. The ties that bound voters to their parties were sorely tested by some of the latter's positions on EC membership (Svåsand and Lindström 1996: 209), and no party family suffered more than the social democrats. In Norway, in the national election a year after the traumatic 1972 referendum campaign (see below), the party's vote fell from the 46.5 per cent to 35.3 per cent. In Denmark, only a small majority of Social Democratic voters was persuaded to back the leadership's support for EC membership in 1972 (Haahr 1993), and, in the notorious 'earthquake' election that followed, SD's support fell from 37.3 per cent to 25.6 per cent. Only in Sweden were the Social Democrats protected by the near absence of Europe from the domestic political agenda, thanks to the obstacle of Swedish neutrality – until, that is, the dramatic policy change of the Social Democratic government in 1990, which led to Sweden's accession in 1995. Only half of the party's supporters backed the leadership's almost unanimous call for a Yes in the 1994 referendum on accession (Gilljam 1996, Aylott 1999b).

[figure 1 about here]

If referendums loosened voters' loyalty to their parties, creating a more volatile electoral market, similar effects can be seen in the results of direct elections to the European Parliament. As can be seen in figure 1, the three Swedish parties with, according to Ray's expert survey (see figure 2), the lowest levels of internal division on Europe – the Left, the Greens (both anti) and the Liberals (pro) – have each done better in European elections than in national elections over roughly the same period. Meanwhile, SAP – the most divided party – has done much worse. In Denmark, where the comparison can be extended back to 1979, a similar pattern emerges. Two Eurosceptical[2] lists, the People's Movement and the June Movement, have established themselves in what, as early as the 1980s, Worre (1987) was calling the 'Danish Euro-party system' – that is, a pattern of competition in European

elections quite distinct from that found in national elections. Figure 1 strongly suggests that it is Social Democratic voters who form the bulk of the defectors to the Eurosceptics' lists. The 'second-order' nature of European elections (Hix 1999: 180-84) has presented voters with a relatively costless opportunity to suspend their usual party allegiances; and this, it will be argued below, has been increasingly recognized and exploited by both voters and parties.

Parties and their members

Figure 2 summarizes the degrees to which Scandinavian parties have, according to expert opinion, been divided internally over Europe in the 1990s. As can be observed, divisions within Norwegian parties are rated generally lower than those in Danish and Swedish parties. Yet earlier the Norwegian Liberals offered arguably the most extreme case of a party being damaged by internal disunity over Europe. Before the 1973 election, a pro-EU faction defected to form a rival party. Although the schism was ended in 1988, the reunited party, in the three elections since, has managed only just over a third of the average share of the vote that the Liberals achieved in the six elections prior to the split.

[figure 2 – on a single portrait page – about here]

As for the other parties, Ray's survey rates the social democrats as the most divided contemporary party in Denmark and in Sweden, and their Norwegian sister party is only just pipped for that dubious honour by the populist, right-wing Progress Party. In each social democratic case, it can fairly be asserted that party elites are predominantly pro-EU, while it is the grass-roots and supporters who are more sceptical. As we shall see, the Eurosceptics have organized themselves to varying degrees. Yet, in SD and DNA at least, the degree of internal division may have diminished in recent years. This could be due to a gradual ascent up a sort of teleological learning curve (cf. Haahr 1993, Marks and Wilson 2000: 442-8): in effect, these parties may be realizing – from the top down – that there is no realistic alternative to being pro-EU. Alternatively, or perhaps in addition, the social democratic party leaderships may have successfully employed management techniques that have taken the sting out of disunity on Europe. In this respect, parties have shown their capacity for institutional learning (Saglie 2000b: 110). For the object lesson in how *not* to manage a divided party was provided by DNA in the early 1970s.[3]

HANDLING THE EUROPEAN ISSUE

In the following sub-sections, we examine some of the ways in which internal disunity over Europe has been handled by party leaderships since the beginning of the 1990s. The focus is primarily on the three social democratic parties. Recall that earlier we identified four goals attributable to parties: government office, policy, votes and unity. Europe has sometimes made the combined pursuit of these goals especially difficult, but not impossible. Management techniques are categorized in four groups: (i) resort to referendums; (ii) goal sequencing; (iii) legitimation, co-option and toleration of dissidents; and (iv) reserving authority and credibility. Underlying them all is what might be called a strategy of *compartmentalization* – that is, of quarantining the EU issue within limited parts of the different arenas in which parties operate.[4]

Resort to direct democracy

The Scandinavian states have different provisions for referendums. Denmark has seen the biggest number, 19, partly because its constitution requires them, *inter alia*, to ratify constitutional change or – if the measure lacks the support of five-sixths of MPs – to delegate power to international organisations, such as the EU (Svensson 1996: 37-8). Yet of Denmark's six votes on aspects of European integration, only the two on Maastricht are generally considered to have been constitutionally unavoidable if the treaty was to be ratified. In Sweden, law can be subject to popular veto if a referendum is proposed by a tenth of its MPs, and backed by a third; but this has never happened (Ruin 1996: 172). Sweden's only EU-related referendum, in 1994, was, in the eyes of the law, purely consultative, and flowed from a simple parliamentary vote. Similarly, in Norway, where the constitution says nothing at all about referendums, the two on EC/EU membership were also advisory. (For a résumé of Scandinavian referendums on Europe, see table 1.) Why, then, should a party submit a policy decision to a referendum when there is no constitutional requirement to do so?

[table 1 about here]

Direct democracy can be used as a minority weapon, either to block the will of a parliamentary majority or to push an issue up the political agenda.[5] Referendums can also be

used tactically to expose or aggravate divisions in other parties on a certain question, or to enhance the legitimacy of a particular decision (Morel 1993). In this sub-section, however, our interest is in the use of referendums for an additional purpose: as a device for mediating internal party division.

To the leaders of a divided party, the value of referring a troubling issue like Europe to a referendum is that the matter is then restricted to a cordoned-off part of the electoral arena; the arena is thus compartmentalized. In this way, voters need not have their usual party allegiances distorted by European questions. Moreover, similarly Eurosceptical party members can be persuaded that, despite their unhappiness with their leaders' line, they need deploy neither the weapon of exit nor – at least not too loudly – that of voice (Hirschman 1970). To take the social democratic examples, supporters of one of these parties need not abandon it if they disagree with the leadership's support for joining EMU, in the case of SD and SAP, or for joining the EU, in the case of DNA. Members and activists, meanwhile, need not defect from the party, nor fight tooth and nail to pull it towards their policy preference. Rather, voters, activists and members can all be assured that, even if they dislike the party leadership's line, '*The war is not lost*' (Bjørklund 1982: 248, italics in original), because the issue will be settled finally in the referendum, when the compartment of the electoral arena reserved for European issues is opened.

Examples of this use of direct democracy abound. It was the Liberals who first called for it to decide the EC question in Norway, in the early 1960s. Doubtless in the light of the defection in 1961 of some on its left to a new party, Labour soon agreed. In Denmark, a five-sixths majority in parliament might have been possible in the 1972 referendum on EC membership, but SD and the Social Liberals preferred to submit the decision to referendum, as EC membership divided both parties (Svensson 1996: 41). In Sweden, there were already precedents for referendums being used 'to solve a knotty parliamentary situation creating disunity either between co-operating parties or within a particular party' (Ruin 1996: 174), on issues like prohibition, driving rules, pensions and nuclear power. With SAP so divided on the question of EU membership, the possibility of the country's accession *without* a referendum was never seriously entertained.

Sequencing goals

The leaderships of all the social democratic parties involved in referendum campaigns on EC/EU issues were committed to pro-integration outcomes, except in 1986, when SD opposed

the Single European Act. But, as we know, this policy preference was not the leaders' only goal. Strategies were required that would combine pursuit of other, possibly conflicting objectives. We have already discussed one aspect of such strategies, that of compartmentalizing the electoral arena. This protection can be augmented by keeping the two partitioned parts of the electoral arena, one pertaining to the election and one to the referendum, as far apart as possible. This does not necessarily imply distance in the chronological sense, however. Indeed, the ideal time to hold a referendum is probably soon after an election. Voters, knowing that they will have another chance to vote on Europe (and on Europe alone), should be less inclined to defect from 'their' parties just because these parties hold positions divergent from the voters' own. Similarly, the antagonists within the party will understand that the election will not decide the issue, and the intensity of the internal battle should be lowered. Third, having internal division exposed during the early period of a new parliament should give the party maximum time to repair the disunity, and for the electorate to forget about it. Finally, in the aftermath of election victory, a governing party will avoid the danger of an electorate using the referendum to 'punish' an unpopular government (Schneider and Weitsman 1996). As well as a tool for mediating internal party disagreement, then, the referendum can thus act as a 'lightning rod', to remove an issue from the political agenda and allow focus on other issues that may be of higher priority, particularly during an election campaign, to the referendum's promulgators (Bjørklund 1982: 248-9). But timing is all important.

These principles became clear after Labour's unhappy experience in Norway in 1972. Negotiations between the government and the EC on terms of accession were concluded in January. This left fully eight months before the referendum, during which DNA's internal division could be, and was, graphically exposed. The party then had only a year to repair the damage before a national election, which it struggled to do. By the 1990s the lessons of goal sequencing had clearly been learned. While the moment at which the negotiations on EU membership were concluded was not entirely under the control of Norway and Sweden's governments, there is evidence that the latter made some effort to manipulate the timetable to match the requirements of goal sequencing.[6]

Some in the ruling Swedish bourgeois coalition wanted to hold the referendum before, or possibly simultaneously with, the election of September 1994. SAP's leaders, however, were emphatically opposed to this. Not only would it have risked having Europe contaminate the election, it would have seriously, perhaps fatally, jeopardized another of the leadership's objectives, a Yes to joining the EU. It was acknowledged by leading Social Democrats that

having to argue for the same outcome in the referendum as the bourgeois coalition was their biggest problem in persuading SAP members and supporters to vote Yes. With a Moderate-led government, SAP supporters would be less likely to accept that the Union could advance the cause of social democracy. Of course, the bourgeois government was equally aware of this fact, which gave SAP in effect the power to insist that the referendum was held just two months after the election (Aylott 1997: 124-6). This sequencing was successful for the Social Democratic leadership: the party returned to office in the election, and then secured a Yes to EU membership. This was, of course, followed by a No in Norway. But, whether by luck or judgment, the Labour government managed to fit the Norwegian referendum into the electoral cycle so that, in contrast to the situation in 1972, three years could elapse before the next parliamentary election. Labour's vote in 1997 was disappointing, but not disastrous, and there was little evidence that the European issue had done much damage.

In Denmark, the timing of the 1992 referendum on Maastricht was not of SD's choosing, as it was in opposition at the time. Similarly, even though it returned to power later in 1992 after the collapse of a bourgeois coalition, scheduling the second Maastricht referendum was largely determined by developments at the EC level. In 1998, however, part of its motivation in calling a snap spring election was to have it precede the referendum on the Treaty of Amsterdam (Aylott 1999a: 65). Again, the timing facilitated the achievement of all the Social Democrats' goals: Europe was kept out of the election campaign, which resulted in an unexpected retention of government office; and two months later, the government secured a comfortable Yes to Amsterdam. Holding a second EU-related referendum during that parliamentary term, on EMU in September 2000, was clearly much less successful, given the result. Some senior Social Democrats had urged delay; but the leadership was persuaded (a) that it could win and (b) that scheduling the vote any later would have risked the issue contaminating the next election, which had to be held by March 2002.

Legitimation, co-option and toleration of dissidents

The resort to direct democracy notwithstanding, a party leadership still has to frame a strategy for handling those in the party who disagree with its line on integration. The commonest ways of treating minority viewpoints are for the leadership (a) to ignore them or (b) to try to suppress them; in extreme circumstances, their adherents can (c) be expelled. But when the leadership's opponents encompass a certain proportion of the party, each tactic runs considerable risks. Ignoring the dissidents can rob the leadership of its legitimacy in the eyes

of the party's membership. Suppression might not work, as the authority conferred on the leadership by the party's statutes may not, in itself, be sufficient to have its will implemented; it must command sufficient support in the organisation to enforce what it wants. Expulsion, meanwhile, even if it can be carried out, may threaten the party with a new, external challenger in the electoral and parliamentary arenas.

All these fates befell DNA in the early 1970s. Ignoring the anti-EC dissidents was ineffective. Not only were they too numerous, they also had a powerful institutional basis in the party. Their domination of Labour Youth entitled the dissidents to seats in the party's major decision-making organs, and it also afforded them the right balance of institutional identity, power and autonomy to facilitate close co-operation with an external group, the People's Movement Against the EC (Skjeie et al. 1995: 34-5). Partly because of this, suppression of the rebels in Labour proved impossible. The party statutes state explicitly that it 'cannot permit organized factions that work against the party and the party's resolutions' (Skjeie et al. 1995: 41). But the leadership proved incapable of enforcing this rule, and looked on as a 'Labour Movement Information Committee Against the EC' marshalled Eurosceptics throughout the party. Its failure to expel the organizers of the committee greatly undermined the leadership's authority within DNA. Ultimately, it did not even persuade the dissidents to stick with the party: many left to join a Socialist Electoral Alliance at the 1973 election, which later cohered into the Socialist Left, still Labour's main rival to the left.

In the 1990s, despite the presence once more of Eurosceptics at all levels and in the trade-union movements, which are closely tied to the two parties, the DNA and SAP leadership handled the dissidents very differently. Perhaps the most important initial act in each party was to establish the boundaries of debate. Before 1972, such boundaries had never been agreed in Labour. Instead, a 'meta-debate' – a debate about the legitimate extent of the internal debate – unfolded (Skjeie et al. 1995: 34), which gave licence to the sceptics to prosecute their campaign without reference to the party's wider interest. Two decades later, and in both DNA and SAP, the 'meta-debate' was settled through compartmentalizing the intra-party arena: Europe was cordoned off from the normal processes of internal party discussion and decision-making. This was done in two ways. First, the dissidents' views were acknowledged and legitimised, partly through co-opting them onto decision-making bodies within the party's internal EU-compartment. Second, once the leadership had announced its support for EU membership, the dissidents' rejection of the party line in favour of their own Eurosceptical disposition was explicitly tolerated.

In the first phase, implicit deals were struck between the leaderships and the sceptics.

The dissidents in general agreed to conduct their campaign in a way that could not be construed as a general challenge to the leadership – which, as Saglie observes (2000a: 55-8), kept the tone of debate within DNA much less incendiary than in the early 1970s. In return, the leaderships agreed to keep their parties' positions open on EU membership, pending the result of the negotiations on terms of accession, and then a further decision by the parties' congresses. The sceptics had to be convinced that there really was the possibility of the party as a whole eventually agreeing not to pursue accession to the EU, if the terms were inadequate; or, perhaps better put, the leadership had to be able to claim plausibly that such a contingency was conceivable. Neutral information campaigns in each party, which went to great lengths to put both sides of the argument to grass-roots 'study circles', were one element in the leaderships' demonstrations of even-handedness. Even more important was the way in which Eurosceptics were co-opted into the parties' decision-making processes on the EU. In Labour before the 1972 referendum, sceptics had been clearly excluded, which had portrayed the anti-EC elements as part of a wider rebellion against the leadership. In the early 1990s, by contrast, Eurosceptics were put in charge of the committees in DNA and SAP that were given special responsibility for management of the question (Aylott 1997: 127-31, Skjeie et al. 1995: 37). The Labour leadership went so far as to make the only Eurosceptic in the cabinet its fisheries minister, and, moreover, to present him as a kind of veto player: if he was not satisfied with Norway's terms of accession, the government claimed, nor would it be (Saglie 2000a: 54). This was a highly symbolic move. The resignation of the Labour fisheries minister in 1972 over Norway's terms of EC membership had dealt a severe blow to the Yes side.

Thereafter, once the party leaderships had come off the fence and announced that their countries' terms of accession were acceptable to them, the ways in which they handled their Eurosceptics became just as crucial. In both parties, the dissidents were given a certain legitimacy. In DNA, this involved a 'contract of disunity'. The Labour national executive agreed that it did not see Social Democrats Against the EC as 'part of the party's activities' (Skjeie et al. 1995: 42), and the ban on organised factions was thus circumvented. While this amounted to 'half-official' status within the party (Saglie 2000a: 58), SAP's leadership went so far as to give the Eurosceptics full official status. At the 1993 party congress, the party, which had its own rules against organised factions, established two committees, one to put the case for EC membership, the other to put the case against. Social Democrats Against the EC, an already organised association, was allowed to assume control of the No committee. The same idea lay behind this, the co-option of Eurosceptics and the study campaigns: namely, to

implicate the No-sayers in the process that led to the final decision on European policy. If the dissidents had been allowed to make their case, if the possibility of their arguments prevailing had been maintained, and if they had been fully involved in the party's decision when it was finally made, there would be less justification for their then defecting from the game. They would look less like martyrs than bad losers. Of course, it is a bonus for the leadership if sceptics can be won round to its view on integration – as, for example, the chairs of both parties' EU-management committees, and the Norwegian fisheries minister, all were in 1994.

Interestingly, SD appeared to be adopting a similar co-option strategy before the Danish referendum on the euro in 2000. Various sceptics within the party had voiced their opposition to EMU both before and after the prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, announced in March 2000 that the referendum would be held the following September. A party report on the question was drawn up by a committee that included Eurosceptics, and, although they could not live with the final version, they were allowed to issue their own minority report. A special party congress on the question was held at the end of April, before which a new Eurosceptical association, the Social Democratic European Network, was formed. But the leadership's strategy changed when, at the congress, the vote against recommending a Yes to EMU in the referendum was derisory, just 14 out of 500 delegates (Danske Nyheder 1 May 2000). Immediately the leadership seemed to decide that, in fact, the dissidents could be safely ignored. The Eurosceptics' network was not allowed a link on the Social Democrats' website, nor was it automatically invited to contribute to internal party discussions on EMU. Even the DKr150,000 that the congress agreed to grant the network appeared less accommodating than condescending.

Reserving authority and credibility

DNA's prime minister in 1972, Trygve Bratteli, had pledged that his government would resign if it failed to achieve a Yes in the referendum. Quite apart from being an invitation to bourgeois supporters to vote No, this high-risk tactic also had implications for the Labour leadership's internal authority. It amounted to an exhortation to Labour members and supporters to vote Yes as an expression of loyalty to the party leadership's authority. But that authority had already been shaken by the failure to confront the organized Eurosceptics within Labour, who were clearly breaking party rules. Moreover, the fact that so many Labour supporters did ultimately vote No could subsequently be seen as an act of defiance, and thus a rejection of the leadership's authority. 'A Labour voter is a Yes voter' was one of the

leadership's slogans in the referendum campaign. As Saglie puts it, 'The parliamentary election the following year showed that many No voters did not want to be Labour voters any more' (2000a: 46-7). The leadership's pursuit of its additional goals was thus badly damaged, long after the referendum had been concluded.

It is not a mistake that Scandinavian party leaders have repeated. At no stage in the European campaigns during the 1980s and 1990s did any party leadership, social democratic or otherwise, lay such a heavy stake on the referendum result going its preferred way. Rather, compartmentalization was employed in an additional way, to preserve the leadership's authority from being damaged by members and supporters declining to follow its recommendation. This was the essence of the 'disunity contract' in DNA: a suspension, albeit strictly time-limited (the Eurosceptics agreed to disband as soon as the referendum was over), of party members' obligation of loyalty to its leadership. In both DNA and SAP in the early 1990s, the legitimacy of voting No was emphasized repeatedly, even after special party congresses had decided to support EU membership[7] (Aylott 1997: 131, Saglie 2000a: 62). And yet the dangerous but powerful weapon of party loyalty was not entirely abandoned. In de-linking the EU issue from its authority, the leaderships may have chosen not to invoke loyalty directly. But the other side of that coin was that, if Eurosceptics were to be released from the usual constraints of sticking to the party's line, so too were *individual* party leaders. Gro Harlem Brundtland of DNA and Ingvar Carlsson of SAP both stated that they would vote Yes whatever their congresses decided. Even though they were constantly reminded of their freedom to hold a different opinion, loyal voters were aware of precisely where their leaders stood.

HYPOTHESES AND CONCLUSIONS

We have seen some of the ways in which the issue of European integration has disrupted party cohesion in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Inevitably, the parties have had to respond to this, and this has taken the form of observable and generalizable changes. The parties' leaderships have seen the challenge of framing strategies that strike an optimal balance between pursuit of their different goals (office, policies, votes, unity), in different arenas (electoral, parliamentary, intra-party), made more difficult. In conclusion, we may summarize and posit hypotheses about how parties, when faced with these questions, seek both to adapt

to their political environment and to shape it more to their liking (Panebianco 1988: 11-4; Saglie 2000b: 108-9).

The functions of compartmentalization

The parties' main response has been to seek to compartmentalize the different arenas in which they operate, so as to isolate the potentially damaging effects that divisive European questions have on their goals of party unity, and therefore vote-maximization, and therefore office-holding. In the electoral arena, the referendum has been increasingly used for this purpose. Voters are persuaded that they need not abandon the party in normal elections just because they disagree with it over European integration, because such questions will be decided separately, in referendums. The same message about when and how European questions are decided is, of course, just as relevant to party members and activists. But they can also be dissuaded from defecting from the party in other ways. Above all, the leadership can make sure that, rather than being suppressed or ostracized, dissidents within the party are legitimized and tolerated. Even better, they may be co-opted into EU-related decision-making, which will also serve to reduce the likelihood of their defecting. The leadership's declining to raise the stakes by calling for members to fall into line in the name of party loyalty and discipline will further reinforce this sense of a friendly disagreement among comrades, as well as reducing the risk of such loyalty being tested and found wanting – that is, of the European compartment leaking into the rest of the intra-party arena. Finally, just as the referendum device feeds both into the electoral arena and the intra-party arena, so a strategy of accommodating dissidents can do the same. It may not be disunity *per se* that damages a party in the eyes of voters, but rather internal conflict – the perception that the protagonists are more interested in fighting each other than in engaging with the concerns of the electorate. If voters can be assured that this is not the case, and that there is room for a wide range of views in the party about Europe, then the danger of losing votes may be reduced.

Although the parliamentary arena has been outside the scope of this article, it may also be possible to compartmentalize that, too. For example, when, after the 1998 Swedish election, SAP established a pact with the strongly Eurosceptical Left and Green parties, it immediately made it clear that EU matters were off-limits to its new partners. The Norwegian Christian People's Party sent a similar message to its new, pro-EU coalition partners, the Conservatives, after the election of September 2001. Any attempt by a party to preserve its alliances by quarantining European questions will naturally be dependent on the

parliamentary bargaining positions of the respective parties, and how intensely each holds its preferences vis-à-vis integration. Whatever the precise nature of a compartmentalization strategy, however, a party leadership will try to keep it as far from the 'normal' political arenas as possible. This means holding referendums when they are likely to do least damage to the party.

We may hypothesize, then, that leaderships of parties that are significantly divided over Europe will (i), when they have the power to do so, resort to referendums to decide especially contentious issues; (ii) suspend normal party discipline when such issues approach the top of the political agenda, with dissidents legitimised, co-opted and tolerated; (iii) decline to use appeals to party loyalty; and (iv) sequence events in a way that optimizes the pursuit of often diverse party goals. To these hypotheses we may add another, or rather one that underpins them all: that the entire strategy of compartmentalization demonstrates the importance of *learning* in politics, relating to both institutions and mass behaviour. Party leaderships learn from previous experience, and from parallel experiences in other parties, especially those with which, geographically and ideologically, they have something in common. Voters learn that European issues, which they may feel strongly about, are not to be decided in national elections, but in specific referendums. Members and activists also learn this, and are thus content to push their preferences less forcefully within the party. In sum, (v) the more compartmentalization is employed, the better it works. These hypotheses could now be tested on parties beyond the Scandinavian social democratic ones examined in this article.

The dysfunctions of compartmentalization

All this does not, however, imply that Scandinavian social democrats have found a magic formula for handling the problem of EU-related division. For a start, while the strategy may be clear, tactics remain difficult to get right. Compare the leaderships of DNA in the early 1970s and SAP in the early 1990s. The former failed spectacularly to achieve any of its four goals: the party split, it lost the referendum, it lost office and subsequently lost votes (Saglie 2000b: 97). The latter achieved all of them: party cohesion endured, its vote increased, office was regained and the referendum was won. But this balance was a fine one. Had a few hundred thousand votes gone the other way in the 1994 referendum, Sweden would have said No to EU membership. The Social Democratic leadership would have seen its primary policy preference lost, and would have faced criticism for not working hard enough to persuade its doubtful members and voters (Aylott 1997: 132). This is roughly what happened in Norway

in the 1990s. DNA stayed all but united, and avoided damage in the next election. But Norway said No to the EU, and thus frustrated the strong preference of the Labour leadership.

More speculatively, we may wonder whether compartmentalization also has more insidious, long-term consequences for a party, particularly oft-governing ones like the Scandinavian social democrats.[8] In fact, it may be working *too* well, which causes problems in different arenas of party operation. Here we consider three arenas, the first hitherto undiscussed in this article.

In the arena of the *state*, it may be making policy-making harder for governing parties. In Denmark, for example, some observers are wondering how coherent policy can be implemented when the EU and domestic politics seem to exist in separate spheres. After all, the EU's competencies are now closely intertwined with most national policy instruments, from macroeconomic stabilization to market regulation and resource distribution. Yet voters have become accustomed – indeed, have been encouraged – to separate the two, thanks to the frequency of referendums. Hence what some regard as Denmark and Norway's awkward positions on EMU and EU membership respectively: the Danes, with their fixed exchange-rate to the euro, without short-term influence in their own monetary policy; the Norwegians being subject to EU single-market rules, but with no votes in the promulgation of those rules. Indeed, compartmentalization has acquired a life of its own in the electoral arena, outgrowing the control of party leaders. It has become hard, with ever more precedents set, to have any vaguely important European issue decided in Scandinavia other than by referendum.[9] SD, for instance, seems doomed to try to govern while constrained by the electorate's Eurosceptical disposition, expressed through direct democracy – despite the fact that the party's own dissidents have apparently diminished beyond the point of serious significance.

This leads to difficulties in the *electoral* arena, in two respects. First, if voters are encouraged to forget party cues when it comes to European issues, it may be hard for a party to run any sort of effective campaign in elections to the European Parliament – as SD and SAP have discovered. Perhaps more dangerously, while forgetting party cues on Europe may protect a divided party in national elections, it may also – paradoxically – make referendums harder for the same party to win. If, as our fifth hypothesis suggested, voters are increasingly learning to separate national- and EU-related polls (however unrealistic such a distinction may be in policy terms), they may be less inclined to punish an unpopular governing party by voting *against* its preference in a EU-related referendum. By the same token, however, they may be similarly disinclined to reward a popular governing party, perhaps in its post-election honeymoon period, by voting *for* its preference (that is, approval of further European

integration, as has always been the case in Scandinavian EU-related referendums). As Schneider and Weitsman (1996: 604) point out, voters often cannot reasonably judge whether the subject of a referendum – a European treaty, a highly complex package deal between governments – will be to their personal advantage or disadvantage.[10] They thus rely on guidance from political elites, who will have had the opportunity and the incentive to become informed about the treaty and its consequences. Yet if the guidance offered by *party* loyalty has been abandoned by the parties themselves, party leaders can only hope that *personal* loyalty to themselves will persuade uncertain voters. Facing cynical modern electorates, appeals to trust politicians may not be enough. This is the price of 'political abdication' (Lindström 1994: 72).

Finally, compartmentalization may also have consequences *within individual parties*. Party discipline has a purpose, namely, maximizing the ability to present a coherent face to the electorate, and thus to garner votes and, potentially, office. Relaxing discipline on one issue might not, in itself, damage that coherent face too badly. But, in the longer term, will it be possible to legitimize dissidence in one compartment, but not in others? In other words, it may be that the norms of intra-party behaviour established in the European compartment will leak into other compartments, making parties in general harder to lead. Indeed, they may already have done so.

Notes

[1] This definition is employed mainly because the individual leaders of Scandinavian parties are not always easy to identify. The offices of party leader, chair of the party organization and chair of the parliamentary party are sometimes distinct. The executive committees usually comprise up to a dozen members, and may be drawn from the larger national executives. These in turn are mostly elected by the parties' congresses or conventions, which are usually, according to the parties' statutes, their highest decision-making organs. Of course, it is perfectly possible for executive committees to be divided over Europe. But, whether united or divided, the committee has to agree a strategy for handling the issue, and the variation in such strategies is the focus of this article.

[2] In this paper, the term Eurosceptical is used to denote actors that, more or less strongly, oppose further European integration. It thus covers both doubters and implacable opponents.

[3] Indeed, in discussing the management of the division within the party, SAP's then leader, Ingvar Carlsson, stated openly that 'We have learned from some of what happened in Norway in 1972' (*Veckans Affärer* 13 June 1994).

[44] This may be compared to the strategy of 'decomposition' identified by Orbell and Fougere (1973). They suggested that, rather than risk the defection of disgruntled activists when their policy preferences were rejected, party leaderships would instead break controversial issues down into smaller issues; their example was the issue of privatization being sub-divided into whether to privatize individual companies or utilities. The leadership could then take a position on each sub-issue that, overall, balanced vote-seeking and policy-seeking objectives. It is argued here, though, that it is the arenas, rather than the issue, that are being decomposed, or compartmentalized.

[5] This has been the primary tactical objective of Scandinavia's contemporary Eurosceptical parties, although most could claim some ideological predilection for direct democracy. But the most striking example of the referendum used as minority gambit was, ironically, implemented by a government, a Danish bourgeois coalition, over ratification of the Single European Act in 1986. Unable to see the treaty through parliament, the government opportunistically and successfully appealed directly to the electorate, and parliament then deferred to the voters' Yes (Worre 1988).

[6] What was clearly manipulated, on the other hand, was the order of the applicant countries' referendums, so as – the four governments hoped – to build up momentum for Yes votes (Jahn and Storsved 1995).

[7] Two months before the Swedish referendum, two well-known Eurosceptics were appointed to the new Social Democratic cabinet after the party's election victory of September 1994.

[8] I am grateful to Lars Bille and Jacob Hødt Larsen for illuminating discussions on these questions.

[9] Such precedents are not confined to individual countries. Once one Scandinavian state has decided to hold a referendum on a particular topic, it becomes awkward for others to avoid doing so.

[10] This, it might be argued, is especially the case in prosperous countries like those in Scandinavia, for whose voters the material advantages of European integration may not be obvious.
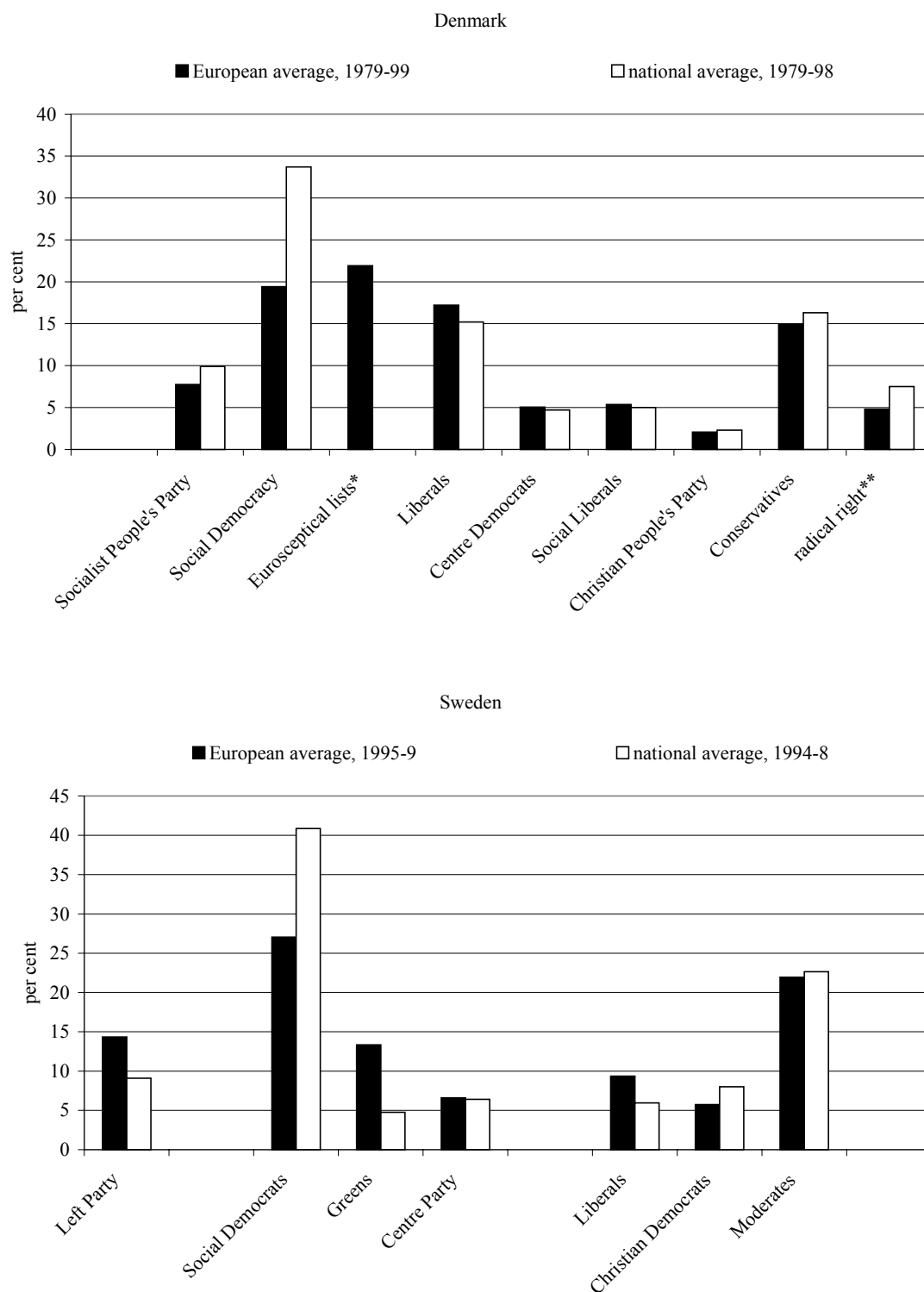
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Figure 1. Average party performances in European and national elections

Denmark

■ European average, 1979-99   □ national average, 1979-98

Sweden

■ European average, 1995-9   □ national average, 1994-8

Note: The scores achieved by Eurosceptical lists* (People's Movement, June Movement) and the radical right** (Progress Party, Danish People's Party) are aggregated.

Figure 2. Scandinavian parties' level of internal division on European integration (expert opinion, average, 1992-6)

Denmark
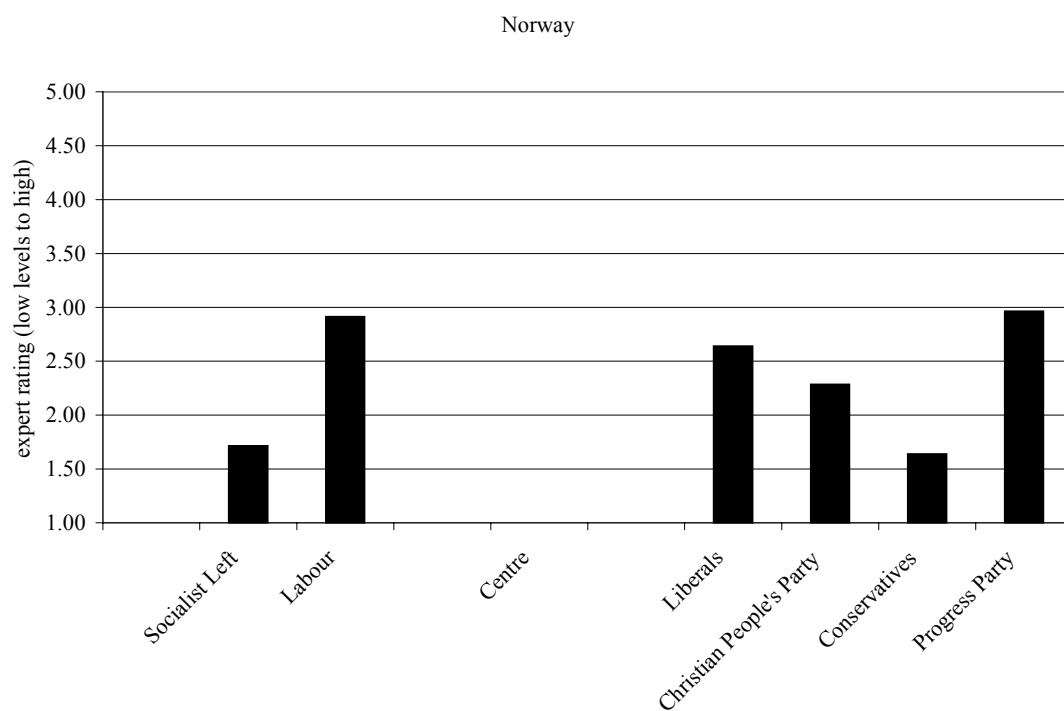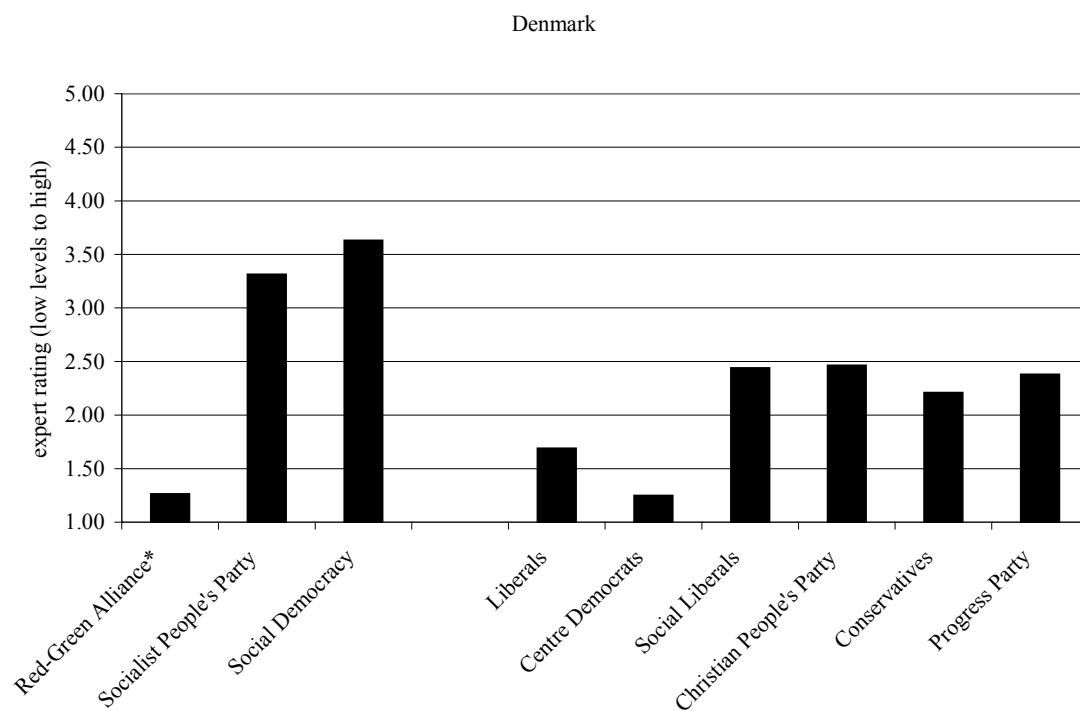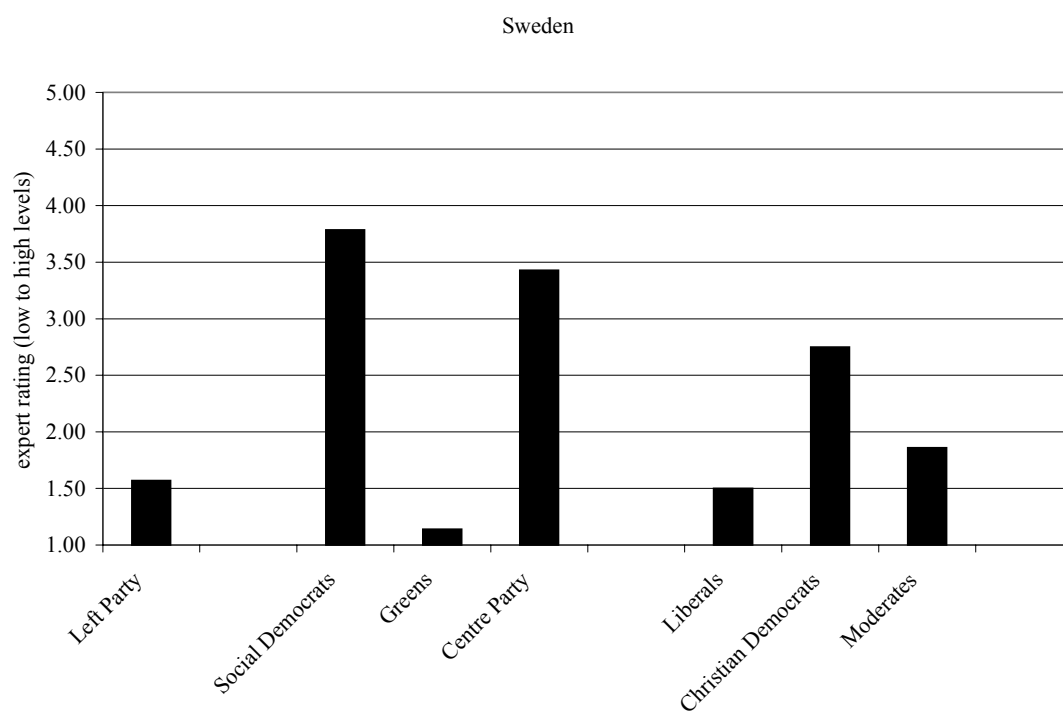
Norway

Sweden

Note: The Red–Green Alliance's score is an average of those given to its component groups.
Source: Ray (1999).

Table 1. Scandinavian referendums on European integration

	DENMARK	NORWAY	SWEDEN
EC membership	Oct. 1972	Sept. 1972	
% Yes	*63.3*	46.5	
% No	36.7	*53.5*	
Single European Act	Feb. 1986		
% Yes	*56.0*		
% No	44.0		
Treaty on European Union	June 1992		
% Yes	49.3		
% No	*50.7*		
Treaty on European Union*	May 1993		
% Yes	*56.8*		
% No	43.2		
EU membership		Oct. 1994	Nov. 1994
% Yes		47.8	*52.3*
% No		*52.2*	46.8
Treaty of Amsterdam	May 1998		
% Yes	*55.1*		
% No	44.9		
accession to EMU	Sept. 2000		
% Yes	46.9		
% No	*53.1*		

* Subject to Edinburgh agreement (Dec. 1992).