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THE COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF COMMUNIST EUROSCEPTICISM IN FRANCE, ITALY AND SPAIN

Giacomo Benedetto and Lucia Quaglia

ABSTRACT

In this work, we compare the Euroscepticism of three West European parties from the same party family: the Communists. We address the questions of how the parties of France, Italy and Spain have adapted to the process of European integration and also the factors that have affected their different responses over time. The French and Italian parties have moved away from Euroscepticism to softer or even pro-integration approaches, whereas the Spanish Communists (PCE) have never been Eurosceptic. Party response to Europe is affected by international, national and party-specific factors, which have different degrees of explanatory power. During the early decades of European integration, international factors, first and foremost the relationship with Moscow, contributed to the Euroscepticism of Western Communists. Nevertheless, as with other party families and types, the Communists have responded to vote- and coalition-seeking opportunities.

KEY WORDS ■ Communist parties ■ Europeanization ■ Euroscepticism ■ France ■ Italy ■ Spain

Introduction

The study of Euroscepticism has gained currency in academic research, informing a rapidly expanding literature that has generally focused on the most recent period, even though Euroscepticism¹ is a long-term phenomenon that dates back to the early stages of European integration in the late 1940s. The few empirical studies that have adopted a wider time frame for analysis have mostly been single country studies (Forster, 2003), rather than comparative political parties studies. So far, very few studies (Batory and Sitter, 2004; Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks et al., 2002) have dealt with party families over a decade or so, concluding that ideology and cleavages

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are the main explanatory factors in determining the orientations of political parties and party families towards the European Union (EU).

Yet, if one considers the Communist party family in Western Europe, the ideological explanation is empirically challenged by the multiplicity of Communist parties' responses to the process of European integration. They have varied from country to country at the same moment in time, as well as within the same party over time. This is puzzling because, if ideology is the main independent variable of party positioning on European issues, one would expect a uniform trend within the same party family, with only minor variations across national parties.

The Communist party family provides valuable material for studying the main causes of Euroscepticism and party adaptation to the process of European integration precisely because its members have adopted a vast array of positions on Europe, whereas parties located closer to the political centre tend to exhibit less Euroscepticism and less variation. Moreover, differently from extreme right-wing parties, which also tend to espouse a high and changeable degree of Euroscepticism, Communist parties had significant electoral shares in Europe in the post-war period at least in certain periods and countries, notably those included in this study. This makes them important actors in the political system in which they were embedded.

In this work, we focus on the Communist parties of France, Italy and Spain. Three complementary criteria justify the selection of cases. To begin with, these Communist parties had a considerable electoral share and were major players in their respective political systems. Second, as mentioned below, they exposed an array of orientations towards European integration, ensuring variation within and across case studies. Third, this case selection also reveals something about the spatial dimension of Euroscepticism, at least among left-wing parties, to encompass both 'hard' and more qualified or 'soft' Euroscepticism. While other Communist parties, such as those of Greece, Portugal and Sweden, also enjoyed considerable electoral support and faced similar challenges to those covered by this study, they have not been included for lack of space.

The time frame of this research spans from France and Italy signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957, and the first elections in Spain following the end of the Franco regime in 1977, to the present day.² An historical method is used, mapping long-term trajectories for each party, identifying turning points and comparing these elements vertically and horizontally. The scope of the comparison is to uncover which factors determine party positioning on European integration.

The article is organized as follows. In the first two sections we review the literature on party-based Euroscepticism and then introduce a theory for Communist Euroscepticism using a multi-level analytical framework and presenting a hypothesis to test the comparative evolution of party policy over time. In the following sections we apply this analytical framework to the empirical record by commenting first on the international factors,

second on the domestic factors and third on the party-specific factors. For reasons of space, several arguments are addressed concisely, especially at the party level. The scope of this article is not to provide a detailed account of Communist positioning on European integration, but rather to identify the main dynamics at play at different ladders of analysis and to demonstrate the value added of a multi-level framework.

Literature Review

What explains the different trajectories followed by Western Communist parties in the process of European integration? The answer to this question feeds into the wider theoretical debate as to whether ideology or strategy determine a party's position on European integration (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2003), contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics of party-based Euroscepticism. It also sheds new light on the process of Europeanization of national political systems (Hix and Goetz, 2000; Ladrech, 2002) – a research agenda that has included political parties only to a very limited extent (Mair, 2000) – by explaining how parties have adapted to the process of European integration and which factors have affected their differing response over time.

The debate on the causes of party-based Euroscepticism has often been framed in Manichean terms, for which Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003) provide a review. On the one side, party positions towards the EU are explained by ideology and cleavages that gave rise to party families (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks et al., 2002). On the other side, there are explanations based on strategic-tactical positioning, the 'politics of opposition' (Sitter, 2001), the incentives and constraints offered by domestic political institutions, such as the electoral system, the types of legislature and the spatial distribution of power within the polity (Aspinwall, 2000; Lees, 2002).

Kopecky and Mudde (2002), finding some common ground between ideological versus strategic accounts of party-based Euroscepticism, argue that ideology determines broad trends towards European integration in principle, while strategy determines whether or not a party supports the EU's current trajectory. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003) maintain that in the debate on causality there has been a conflation of Eurosceptic party positions and the use of Eurosceptic discourse in inter-party competition, whereas the two processes should be kept analytically distinct. According to these authors, party fundamentals on Europe are determined by party ideology and the perceived interests of their supporters. The relative importance of these two causal factors depends on whether it is a more ideological, value-based goal-oriented party or more pragmatic, interests-based office-seeking party (Batory and Sitter, 2004).

The strategic use of Euroscepticism in party competition depends on electoral strategy, coalition formation and government participation tactics

(Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2003). A party's electoral strategy is determined by a number of variables: the electoral system, which determines whether a party can survive by carving out a niche, or it needs a broad electoral base; format of the party system; structure of the state in terms of distribution of power; positions taken by competitors; party typology, that is, whether it is a catch-all party or a clientelistic one with a segmented electoral strategy; electoral appeal and party discourse, in that a protest party is more likely to oppose Europe; the views of a party's current and potential activists, rather than voters, on EU integration and the salience accorded to EU issues; and party unity and intra-party factions. Other factors to be taken into account are a party's tactical considerations, which include the position of potential coalition partners, and the prospect of access to government.

Taggart (1998) identifies four ways in which Euroscepticism can be manifest in parties: single-issue Eurosceptic parties, whose very *raison d'être* is opposition to the EU; protest parties that have taken an anti-EU position as an adjunct to their general opposition to the functioning of political systems; established parties with Eurosceptical positions; and Eurosceptical factions in existing parties.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the comparative literature on party-based Euroscepticism has predominantly searched for explanations at the national and party level, whereas the influence of external factors has seldom if ever been considered. The only exceptions have been specific studies of Western Communist parties (Bell, 1996), which have mentioned the importance of relations with the USSR in shaping the parties' policy on European integration, without connecting the international and national levels of analysis, nor explaining the effects of common external factors in various national systems.

A Theory of Communist Euroscepticism

Building on the review of the literature, this research considers and links explanatory factors at the international, national and party levels. Each of these levels is elaborated further and operationalized in the following sections.

(i) International factors, above all geopolitics, reverberate in the national environment and inform party policy on Europe (Bell, 1996). Yet, international politics are filtered through the lenses of domestic politics and are interpreted by the parties.

(ii) The national contexts in which the parties operate shape party positions on Europe. Of primary importance are: public opinion attitudes towards European integration (Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996; Gabel, 1998) and domestic political institutions (Aspinwall, 2000; Lees, 2002). The latter comprise the electoral system; the configurations of the party system, such as access to office, position of major potential allies or competitors on

European issues and, consequently, the need to moderate views on Europe in order to become coalitionable (Batory and Sitter, 2004); and historical legacies. Thus, the term 'institutions' is used to encompass electoral systems, modalities of the party system and the normative social order as influenced by historical developments. National factors are, in turn, affected by international trends and by party-specific features, and, at the same time, they frame external influence and party behaviour.

(iii) Certain party-specific features, such as leadership (Guiat, 2003) and party type (Taggart, 1998), set the tone of Eurosceptic discourse. We might expect Communist parties to be more flexible than parties from other families precisely because of the strong leadership provided through democratic centralism. The party type, that is, whether it is a protest party or an established party, is important, although it can be regarded as resulting from national level factors. Parties contribute to shape the national political system in which they interact and affect the perception of external influence. Parties that are policy based are likely to support or oppose Europeanization, according to whether or not it strengthens their own veto power in the domestic sphere or weakens that of their opponents (Hix and Goetz, 2000). While Taggart (1998) suggests that ideological outliers may use Euroscepticism to differentiate themselves from the pro-system centre parties, this is more likely to apply to new movements such as the Greens or the populist right than to the Communists. Where Communists might become more Eurosceptic is in response to the indirect effects of Europeanization, such as the convergence between conventional left and right on subjects such as economic policy in the light of the constraints of monetary union, a convergence with which Communists may be unlikely to conform despite their desire to become coalitionable.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003: 1) develop the concepts of 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism. They define the former as: 'principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU, in other words, based on the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU', while the latter occurs when: 'there is opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make'. According to these criteria, both the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the French Communist Party (PCF) were 'hard Eurosceptic' from the beginning of the Cold War in 1947 and opposed any plans for West European integration for ideological reasons. After 1962, they both softened their hard Euroscepticism. Yet, whereas the PCF remained Eurosceptic with an 'in-the-system-out-of-the-system' approach to European integration until 1997, afterwards becoming 'soft' Eurosceptic, the scepticism of the PCI declined markedly in the 1960s and disappeared in the 1970s. Post-1991, its main successor party, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), has been one of the most pro-European parties in Italy, although the small Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) exposes soft Euroscepticism. By contrast, the Spanish Communists (PCE)

never opposed European integration following the death of Franco, although they objected to some EU economic policies. This led the United Left (IU), the left-wing coalition led by the PCE, to oppose Maastricht in 1992 and the EU Constitution in 2005, but not the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. A periodization of the three parties' positions towards Europe is reported in Table 1.

Since the Communists were ideological outliers throughout the Cold War, an interesting question is why they were not more Eurosceptical than they were. As a transnational political system underpinned by capitalism, the EU provided Communists with the perfect target for anti-system campaigning. Although the PCF and, in the earlier decades of European integration, the PCI were hard Eurosceptic parties, the EU was never their primary focus. Their opposition to the system was constructed around an ideology that had other more global priorities. This differentiates the Communists from other more recent Eurosceptic movements, primarily on the new populist right, that have 'Europe' as one of their primary targets. From this perspective, Communist Euroscepticism was always softer, since it was merely an extension of a broader opposition to capitalism. Electoral considerations, the popularity of the EU in southern Europe and the quest for coalitionability by the Communists all served to moderate their Euroscepticism.

This leads us to construct the following hypothesis: having started in the same place due to international factors affecting their party family, Communist parties moved in the same direction but at different speeds and times, depending on the configuration of national and party-specific factors.

Table 1. Periodization of parties' positions towards 'Europe'

<i>PCF</i>	<i>PCI</i>	<i>PCE</i>
1947–62: opposition to (western) European integration	1947–62: opposition to (western) European integration	–
1962–72: (USSR thesis) 'a democratic transformation of the Common Market'	1962–68: (USSR thesis) 'a democratic transformation of the Common Market'	–
1972–84: Euroscepticism underground but it does not disappear	1968–1979: reorienting the EC towards democratic objectives	–
1984–97: return to fully fledged opposition to Europe	1979–90: PCI as pro-EC	1975–88: support for EC membership
1997: soft Euroscepticism	1991 post-PCI: PDS and PdCI pro-EU, PRC soft Euroscepticism	1992: opposition to TEU, but pro-federalist position

Such a hypothesis is tested by examining key points and policy changes, the relationship with the USSR and domestic democratic systems in which the parties operated, the challenges of vote-seeking and coalition-seeking, and the effects of critical junctures such as the events of 1989. If the hypothesis is correct, we would expect to see Euroscepticism changing in line with attempts to become coalitionable, yet surviving if electorally expedient. As such, the loosening of the ties with Moscow and interaction with the electoral market will determine the strategic choice whether to pursue or abandon Eurosceptic policy in a way similar to any other ideological outlying or coalition-seeking party.

International Factors

Changes in the positions of Communist parties on European integration were directly and indirectly affected by international politics in the form of the relationship with the USSR and the power dynamics of the Cold War. International factors acting as independent variables have higher intensity than national factors, though they are less frequent.

In the early post-war period, although certain policies and stances such as the opposition to European integration had electoral payoffs, the reason for Western Communist parties' campaign positions are not found in national electoral constraint, because the policy decisions of the parties were controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and had to follow these guidelines in a coordinated fashion (Bell, 1996). These ties constrained the parties' room for manoeuvre internationally and domestically, as the USSR totally opposed European integration at the beginning, and it would have opposed any attempt to move towards social democracy, as well as plans for domestic insurrection. At the same time, the 'iron ties' with Moscow were the glue for the Western Communist parties in opposition, and they provided external symbolic and financial resources, informing party perceptions of the United States and the EU. Yet, these international factors did not affect all the parties in the same way because they were framed by public opinion attitudes, domestic institutions and party-specific factors.

In 1947, the PCF and PCI were expelled from the immediate post-war government coalitions. Between 1947 and 1962, these two parties, like the other Western Communist parties, viewed any attempts at Western European integration as an extension of the US military alliance antagonistic to the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the PCF and PCI opposed the Schuman Plan and voted against ratification of the treaties leading to the Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the European Defence Community in 1954 and the EC in 1957.

In 1962, Moscow published 'The 32 Theses on Imperialist Unification in Western Europe', which assessed the efficient functioning of the EC, although

highly critical of its supposed capitalist and militarist aspects (Callot, 1988: 309). In turn, the PCF and PCI acknowledged the successful operation of European institutions and quietly adapted their policies to deal with the new reality. The only means of reforming the EC, as the PCF and PCI perceived it, was to end the ostracism of Eastern Bloc countries and establish economic relations with them. The PCF developed its own policy in this regard, deciding in favour of attempting to influence European institutions (Callot, 1988: 310). Meanwhile, the PCI demanded a 'democratic transformation of the Common Market' (Maggiorani, 1998: 94).

The Soviet intervention of 1968 in Czechoslovakia had important repercussions for both the PCI and PCF, their relations with the CPSU, their bilateral relations and their orientations towards European integration. The PCI began to envisage a crucial role for Europe outside the bipolar logic – that Europe could be a third neutral pole in the international context (Maggiorani, 1998). The PCF, instead, reconciled itself to the Soviet intervention, and this marked a significant breach between the PCF and PCI. Santiago Carrillo, the exiled Secretary-General of the Spanish Communists, signalled his own party's reconciliation with the EC at the 1972 Congress of the PCE held in Paris. The catalyst for this was the defiance of the Italian party to Moscow and the commencement of the Eurocommunist period.

The initiative of Eurocommunism in favour of a reformed and more democratic version of Western Marxism to reshape the relations with the USSR affected Western Communist party policy towards European integration. In 1973, the PCF and PCI had held a joint meeting at which they supported building common policy with Socialists and left-wing Catholics to protect the interests of workers, as well as trade cooperation with COMECON. It was at that point that the PCF joined the Communist Group in the European Parliament (EP), finally ending its boycott (Stiefbold, 1977: 111), whereas the PCI had entered the EP in 1969 (Maggiorani, 1998).

In January 1974, a Congress of West European Communist Parties was held in Brussels, with Enrico Berlinguer (Secretary-General of the PCI), Georges Marchais (Secretary-General of the PCF) and Santiago Carrillo supporting European solidarity to unite European peoples against big capital. Marchais, however, preferred to use the term 'proletarian internationalism' (Stiefbold, 1977: 110), rather than Eurocommunism, to denote a relative distance from his more reformist comrades. In terms of foreign policy, Marchais (1974: 70) was scathing, complaining that France was in a unilateral network of the US-led Atlantic Alliance and a 'little Europe of big capitalists', underlining his refusal to 'alienate the sovereignty of our country for the benefit of an external authority, so-called "European"'. After a five-year experiment with the Common Programme (see below) and Eurocommunism, the PCF returned to type in 1977, and the divergence between the PCI and PCE on the one side and the PCF on the other became definitive.

The third juncture of 1985 was the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as Secretary-General of the CPSU and of Jacques Delors as President of the

European Commission. The reforms initiated by Gorbachev would lead to disintegration of the Soviet system in Central and Eastern Europe within four years, as he allocated autonomy from Moscow to Communist parties internationally. Delors' appointment in Brussels led to the creation of the single market programme, which significantly increased the powers of the future EU at the expense of national sovereignty. Although both events would have long-term significance, their effect on the parties in this study was not immediate. The PCI and the IU continued their policies of reform, choosing not to use Euroscepticism as a vote-seeking strategy, while the PCI in particular continued to seek coalitionability. The PCF did not modify its positions on Europe, nor did it take advantage of Gorbachev's calls for greater party reforms. Although the PCI favoured the Single European Act, which the PCF opposed, their responses to its eventual policy outcomes in the domestic sphere would be more significant.

The fourth critical international juncture was the end of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. This consolidated the changes made by the PCE with the creation of the IU, while providing the final necessary push for the PCI to reclassify itself as a social democratic party, as explained in the following section. However, the reform processes of both the PCI and the PCE were well under way by this time and the turning point in PCI orientations towards European integration had already taken place in the 1970s. With regard to the PCF, 1989 made no impact, whether on the use of Euroscepticism or in terms of party structures and policies, until the retirement of Georges Marchais in 1994.

If international factors in the forms of relations with the USSR and the Cold War tended to produce similar responses across Communist parties, the domestic reverberation of these factors differed somewhat among Western European countries. During the Cold War period, Italy was a country under the American sphere of influence, with a specific geopolitical position, bordering the Iron Curtain, while France remained a significant power in Europe. This had far-reaching implications for domestic politics and political institutions in that, for the PCI to be a coalitionable party, it needed to acquire 'democratic legitimacy', domestically and externally (i.e. vis-à-vis the US), moderating its foreign policy, including its Eurosceptic stance. The 'democratic adaptation' of the Italian party (Bosco, 2000), as well as that of the PCE, as explained in the following section, represented a major difference with the PCF, which did not undergo such a process in those years. The French party defined its problem as keeping external influence, such as European, out of the French political system. For the PCI, Italy was already influenced by its partners, the task was therefore to persuade them of the acceptability of Communist participation in government. The ties of the PCI with Moscow had already loosened in the 1970s, after which the PCI condemned the Soviet-inspired military coup of 1981 in Poland in the strongest terms (Gozzini, 2001; Gundle, 1993).

Domestic Factors

In principle, an array of domestic factors can affect Communist party change on Euroscepticism, though public opinion and domestic political institutions are the most important. Public opinion attitudes towards European integration delimit the size of the potential pool of Eurosceptic voters and the social acceptability of Eurosceptic positions. Adopting an historical institutionalist framework, the following political institutions are identified as important: the electoral system and the configuration of the party system, which includes the relationship with potential allies and competitors, their positions on European issues and the political salience of these issues domestically – all determining the need or not to moderate views on Europe in order to become coalitionable or attract voters. Furthermore, the national normative social order, which is deeply affected by historical legacies, such as the view of the EU as a means to entrench democracy in Italy and Spain, and the Jacobin political tradition in France, strengthen or weaken the acceptance of the process of European integration.

Public Opinion

Foreign policy is usually of secondary salience for public opinion. Nevertheless, in the long term, public opinion can exert pressure on the foreign policy of parties (Putnam, 1978). The level of support in public opinion for the EU can act as an incentive in distancing the party from Eurosceptic discourse. France, Italy and Spain have a relatively high degree of pro-Europeanism, as reported historically by Eurobarometer data first published in the 1970s. There has been some variance with public opinion support for European integration having been much higher in Italy than in France, with Spain in between.

Public opinion support for the EU in France never exceeded 70 percent, reaching its peak at the end of the 1980s, and declining to 50 percent at the end of the 1990s. The failure of the public to respond positively to the PCF's hard Euroscepticism contributed to its change of approach in 1962, as did the PCI in the same period, albeit more decidedly. Until the 1980s, the scepticism did not harm the PCF, firstly, due to the lack of salience of the European issue in French public opinion, and, secondly, because it did not monopolize Euroscepticism within the party system. The success of François Mitterrand in continuing to attract ex-Communist voters once the Socialist Party (PS) had become explicitly pro-European towards 1981 indicates that the issue of opposing European integration as a matter of principle was not uppermost in the minds of Communist supporters.

When the EC was created in 1957, the support of Italian public opinion was lukewarm compared to public attitudes elsewhere in Europe, as indicated by the data reported by Putnam (1978) before the creation of the Eurobarometer. However, support for the EC increased in the 1960s and

1970s, significantly contributing to the shift of the PCI's stance on Europe. By 1976, support for the EC in Italy was higher than anywhere else in Europe, peaking at 80 percent in the 1980s, although gradually declining to 60 percent in the late 1990s. The fact that, except for small extreme-right parties, no Eurosceptic parties existed in Italy until the end of the 1990s, when both the Northern League and PRC adopted a Eurosceptic discourse, suggests there was little to gain and much to lose if the PCI had not re-oriented its position on Europe.

Public opinion support for EC membership in Spain reached its height in the late 1980s, when it totalled 80 percent. Political culture in Spain is deeply imbued with an awareness of the significance that the 'European dimension' has had since 1975. MacLennan (2000: 188) asserts emphatically that 'a very significant characteristic in Spain was the absence of Euroscepticism or proposal of alternatives to European integration'. No significant opposition to European integration made progress in Spain, as suggested by the fact that, except for marginal right-wing parties, no parties used Eurosceptic discourse. In Spain, as in Italy, Europe was to remain identified with liberty, modernization and prosperity.

Domestic Political Institutions

In explaining Western Communist party positions on European integration, domestic political institutions and, to be precise, the electoral system and the configuration of the party system are important because these determine the range of potential allies and competitors whose policy on the EU should be factored in by Communist parties in the elaboration of their policy on European integration. Furthermore, in a party system in which no mainstream political party opposes Europe, it is much more risky and potentially counterproductive for an aspiring mainstream party to do so. The electoral performances of the three parties are reported in Table 3. It should also be noted that national political institutions, including other political parties, framed the reverberation effects of international politics, especially the Cold War, on domestic politics.

In the French electoral system, deputies in the National Assembly have been elected in single-member majoritarian constituencies since 1958, with the exception of the elections of 1986 held under proportionality. With two rounds, unless a candidate is elected with over half the votes at the first round, a second ballot is held in which only candidates gaining less than 12.5 percent of the support of registered voters in the first round are eliminated. In practice, since 1962, the less well-placed candidates of left and right have withdrawn in favour of those who were ahead at the first round. The effect of this is that although the PCF and PS³ have competed during the first round, even when ideologically distant, they have had to coalesce at the second round.

The incentives and constraints for the PCF in choosing whether or not to use a Eurosceptic or wider anti-system discourse can only be understood in

terms of the configuration of the party system and therefore the party's competition or alliances with the PS, which in 1978 became the largest party of the left in France. Before 1958, the proportional system did not require electoral alliances with the Socialists and consequently the Communists found themselves less constrained. Since 1958, the complex relationships between the PCF and PS led both parties to downplay European issues whenever they were involved in electoral agreements; for example, in the presidential elections of 1965 or during the Common Programme of 1972 to 1977. Likewise, Communist participation in the government of Pierre Mauroy from 1981 to 1984 went hand in hand with less hostile attitudes towards the EC. When in 1984 the PCF returned to opposition, its hard Euroscepticism re-emerged, as became evident when Michel Rocard formed a minority Socialist government in 1988, to whose European policies the Communists were particularly hostile. In 1997, PCF entry into the Jospin government as the junior coalition partner softened the stance of the party on Europe. Under the 'modernizing' leadership of Robert Hue, who had taken over in 1994, the party quietly dropped hard Euroscepticism from its discourse in favour of a left-wing critique of the EU as an entity that was insufficiently democratic and interested only in promoting free trade. This moderation survived the party's further electoral decline and return to opposition in 2002, although it joined with many French Socialists in opposing the EU Constitution with a familiar economic critique. Quite apart from its historic links with the Soviet Union and French Jacobinism, the PCF's *ouvrieriste* nature determined in large part its Euroscepticism, since the party has continually found itself at loggerheads with the single market and economic policy that begins in Brussels. Parties are likely to oppose Europe if this threatens their policy priorities (Mair, 2000) and undermines their position as domestic veto players (Hix and Goetz, 2000).

The other important factor in explaining the dynamic of PCF Euroscepticism is to consider the position of the other main parties on Europe. The Gaullists are nationalists and always had an intergovernmentalist, even soft, sceptical approach to European integration. The relevance of the European question for the Communists in electoral terms declined when de Gaulle monopolized Eurosceptic discourse during the Empty Chair Crisis⁴ and the withdrawal from NATO in 1966. Thus, geopolitical orientations substantially differentiate the Gaullist Centre-Right in France from Christian Democracy in Italy, Germany or the Benelux countries, also highlighting the importance of specific national historical legacies. As far as the nation's social order, or historical legacy, is concerned, whereas political Catholicism, with its universalistic approach, is weaker in France than in Italy, Jacobin nationalism pervades both Gaullism and French Communism.

An important feature linking the party system and party-specific factors was that during the Cold War the PCF assumed a tribune role for the excluded in France. While this strengthened its anti-system attributes, it also rendered the party more nationalist than internationalist, since those

same excluded groups were likely to perceive themselves as losers from European integration (Guiat, 2003: 9), including the rural population (Laird, 1993). Differently from the PCI and PCE, the PCF has not been concerned about being perceived as an anti-system party, lacking democratic legitimacy; indeed, this did not prevent it from entering government in the 1980s, illustrating how international factors played out differently from country to country.

To sum up, Euroscepticism for the PCF had always been merely an extension of the party's anti-system nature, pro-Soviet loyalties in geopolitics and opposition to free trade. The French party had established a precedent for hardening and softening its attitude to European integration in the past, moving from outright opposition to the Treaty of Rome, towards accepting it and trying to modify it from 1962 onwards. Indeed, until the 1980s, it was not the party's Euroscepticism that made it unelectable. Its views on integration were either shared by the Gaullists or made no difference, since electoral and coalition behaviour in the Fifth Republic was motivated by other factors.

The Italian electoral system until the 1994 elections was one of almost perfect proportionality, leading to a party system of 'polarised pluralism' (Sartori, 1976) with anti-system parties at both ends of the political spectrum. The only way for the PCI to enter government was in alliance with one of the main parties in the governing majority, in order to overcome the convention that *de facto* excluded the party from government in Italy. It should be noted that this so-called imperfect bipolarism was inextricably linked to the power dynamic of the Cold War, and how the latter played out in the Italian system, highlighting the interconnections between the external and domestic level. The Communists did not require electoral alliances in order for deputies to be elected, but coalition-building, whether at municipal, regional or national level, had always been pursued by the party. The PCI's relationship with potential allies and competitors differed from that of the French or Spanish Communists in so far as the Italian party was the largest on the left, reaching its peak of 34 percent in 1976, but potential allies were mostly unwilling to accept the party in a governing coalition.

The party's two main potential allies, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats, were strongly pro-European and therefore for the PCI to be coalitionable it had to reorient its views on foreign policy. With respect to agrarian parties in the Nordic countries and Central and Eastern Europe, Batory and Sitter (2004) find that vote-seeking and coalition-seeking behaviour determine a party's Eurosceptic position. In order to be recognized as 'democratically legitimate', gaining access to office, the full acceptance of the EC was a necessary, though insufficient, precondition. This was part and parcel of the PCI strategy for democratic adaptation, based on the moderation of ideology, programme and political positions (Bosco, 2000). The PCI attempted a rapprochement with the Christian Democrats (DC) during the so-called 'historic compromise', which resulted in short-lived support for a DC government in 1978–79. Subsequently, the party tried a similar

strategy with the Socialist Party (PSI) in the 1980s, the so-called 'democratic alternative', which was equally unsuccessful. The decline of the relevance of the Communist party in the 1980s led to a crisis within the party, which emerged more overtly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Over the 1970s, pro-European statements began appearing in PCI documents on foreign policy (Sassoon, 2001). Under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI's shift of position was so neat that the party actively encouraged other European Communists to adopt less hostile attitudes towards European integration (Putnam, 1978), something taken up by the Spanish party following the death of Franco. The last backlash of PCI opposition to European monetary integration occurred in 1979, when the party, using economic arguments, voted against Italy joining the European Monetary System (Ludlow, 1982).

In 1991, the PCI was transformed into the PDS, experiencing an internal split, with a group of harder line and nostalgic Communists forming the PRC. The PDS became an explicitly social democratic and 'catch-all' party, consolidating its pro-European position. The party was one of the staunchest supporters of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in Italy, once Maastricht was agreed in 1992, also because this was deemed to be the best way to prove that it was a responsible democratic governing party. With the implosion of the PSI due to the *Tangentopoli* corruption scandals, the PDS moved quickly to occupy the political space that the Socialists had vacated. The party was admitted to the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists in 1993. Although not recognized as a legitimate player by some of its electoral competitors in Italy, the PDS used pro-Europeanism for its legitimization, serving the objective of both vote- and coalition-seeking. The party emerged as the most significant member of Romano Prodi's *Ulivo* government following the 1996 elections, at which it had presented itself under a party list named European Left.

In 1998, the leadership of the PRC divided on the question of voting no-confidence in the government led by Romano Prodi on the question of Italy's entry into the euro. Consequently, a more moderate Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) was formed by one of the historic former leaders of the old PCI, Armando Cossutta, specifically to offer 'Communist solidarity' to the Centre-Left. Although the Euroscepticism of the remaining anti-system rump of the PRC still exists, the electoral competitors of the PRC on the left and the pro-European attitudes of Italian public opinion explain why the PRC has generally downplayed its Eurosceptic positions, using mainly economic arguments.

Differently from the PCF and PCE, the PCI and PDS have always been the largest party of the left, excluded from government (before 1996), whose aim, by the early 1970s, has been both vote- and coalition-seeking. The priority given to these objectives shifted over time; however, the position on Europe was a key component of PCI overall strategy towards reaching those goals.

In Spain, three main domestic institutions determined the PCE position on European integration. The electoral system of limited proportionality, whereby seats are distributed in relatively small province-based electoral districts, favoured the two largest state-wide parties, the People's Party (PP) and the Socialist Party (PSOE), as well as the regional parties whose support is geographically concentrated. The PSOE has been the dominant party of the left in Spain since the return to democracy. The victory of the Socialists in the elections of 1982 saw the first decline in the PCE vote, with the transfer of votes to the PSOE, which offered a more modern left-wing alternative. The PCE's historical leader, Carrillo, retired shortly thereafter, and the party entered a crisis, which was partially resolved by the creation of an alliance of left-wing groupings, the United Left (IU) in 1986, in which the PCE was the dominant force (Ramiro-Fernandez, 2004).

As far as the party system and potential allies and competitors are concerned, the IU, however, had no prospect of gaining power and was not required as a coalition partner by the PSOE. The strategy that the IU chose was not hard scepticism, but hard opposition to the PSOE, which became more relevant as the PSOE moved to the right and was engulfed by corruption scandals. Opposition to the Maastricht Treaty formed a part of IU's strategy, including the use of soft, economics-based Euroscepticism. Since the opposition of the IU leadership to Maastricht was not wholeheartedly supported by the rank and file membership, that policy, like others on European integration, must be seen as a tactical ploy to distinguish the party from the PSOE as its nearest ideological rival. Heywood (1995: 178) and Maravall (1982: 184) have indicated the extent to which PSOE and PCE/IU voters perceive themselves as occupying almost identical points on a left-right ideological continuum. If one adds to this that most Spanish voters see themselves as slightly left-of-centre, and the fact that ideological polarization is less in Spain than in other European countries (Moxon-Browne, 1989: 25), one can see that using European integration as a 'proxy issue' to mark out 'space' on an overcrowded part of the left-right continuum may be a plausible explanation for the limited scepticism displayed by the opposition to Maastricht. However, the party has a radical left pro-federalist position, and it voted in favour of Amsterdam in 1997, which had been negotiated by the PP's leader Jose Maria Aznar.

The normative social order and historical legacy was paramount in that the European 'mission' of successive post-Franco governments has been strongly associated in the popular mind with the country's modernization: in the economics field, in politics and in terms of progressive legislation. Membership of the EC in 1986 was supported by key sectors of Spanish society: the Army, the Church, the trade unions and the political parties. Thus, Spain's European vocation exerted a powerful unifying influence over political life, in sharp contrast to the ideological divisions aroused by the Civil War and perpetuated by the vindictive nature of the 40-year dictatorship that followed. No other political group in Spain was opposed to EC

membership except elements of the neo-fascist right and therefore the PCE joined all other political parties in supporting the application for EC membership which was lodged a few months after the 1977 election. Towards the end of the Franco regime, the Spanish party faced the challenge of integration in the democratic regime, and went to considerable lengths in order to reassure 'reactionary forces' like the military (Carrillo, 2000). Its reformism went further at the time than that of the PCI, and was an integral part of the transition to democracy. IU's strategy in opposing Maastricht in 1992 and the EU Constitution in 2005 underlay what may be described as federalist maximalism rather than Euroscepticism, reflecting a vote- and coalition-seeking strategy. Although a 'No' vote may be viewed as Eurosceptic, justifying such a position from the point of view of insufficient social integration means that the party does not oppose the entire project of European integration *per se*, which would be electorally unpopular and render the party uncoalitionable. Having peaked at the elections of 1996, IU suffered significant declines in the national elections of 2000 and 2004, with borrowed votes returning to the PSOE which had come under new leadership. Opposition to the EU Constitution in the referendum of 2005 marked a return to the theme of left-wing federalism on account of the Constitution being insufficiently radical. This was consistent with the IU's longer standing opposition to the policy effects of Europeanization, comparable to that of the PCF or PRC.

With regard to agrarian parties, Batory and Sitter (2004) provide a useful overlapping table to illustrate the vote-seeking behaviour and coalition-ability of the parties in their comparative study. This is applied to the Euroscepticism of the Communists and post-Communists of France, Italy and Spain in Table 2. The Italians have been consistently pro-European for both vote-seeking and coalition-seeking reasons since 1974, a position shared by the Spanish party during the first years of the Spanish return to democracy, and once again during the Aznar period when IU sought a coalition with the PSOE. In neither case was there any electoral credit to be gained from avowedly Eurosceptic positions. During the long years of Socialist government following 1982, the PCE and IU were by definition non-coalitionable,

Table 2. Vote- and coalition-seeking behaviour of the PCF, PCI, PCE and their successors

<i>Behaviour types</i>	<i>Vote-seeking</i>	
	<i>Pro-EU</i>	<i>Anti-EU electoral bias</i>
Coalition-seeking	PCI/PDS/DS 1974– PdCI 1998– PCE 1977–82 IU 2000–	PCF 1972–77, 1981–84, 1997– PCI 1957–74 PRC 1991–98, 2004–
Non-coalitionable	PCE/IU 1982–2000	PCF 1957–72, 1977–81, 1984–97 PRC 1998–2004

Table 3. Communist share of popular vote and electoral turnout, since 1953

	<i>France</i>		<i>Italy</i>				<i>Spain</i>	
	<i>Turnout</i>	<i>PCF</i>	<i>Turnout</i>	<i>PCI-PDS-DS</i>	<i>PRC</i>	<i>PdCI</i>	<i>Turnout</i>	<i>PCE-IU</i>
1953			93.9	22.6				
1956	82.7	25.9						
1958	77.2	19.2	93.7	22.7				
1962	68.7	21.7						
1963			92.9	25.3				
1967	81.1	22.5						
1968	79.9	20.0	92.8	26.9				
1972			93.2	27.1				
1973	81.3	21.4						
1976			93.4	34.4				
1977							77.0	9.3
1978	71.6	20.6						
1979			90.4	30.4			68.1	10.8
1981	70.9	16.2						
1982							79.8	4.0
1983			89.0	29.9				
1986	78.5	9.8					70.4	4.6
1987			88.9	26.6				
1988	66.2	11.3						
1989							70.0	9.1
1992			87.4	16.1	5.6			
1993	68.9	9.2					77.0	9.6
1994			86.1	20.4	6.0			
1996			82.9	21.1	8.6		78.1	10.5
1997	68.0	9.9						
2000							68.7	5.5
2001			81.4	16.6	5.0	1.7		
2002	60.3	4.8						
2004							77.2	5.0
2006			83.6	17.2	5.8	2.3		

but maintained a vote-seeking stance by at least not opposing European integration. At different times, the French pursued a strategy of coalition-ability alongside a harder Euroscepticism, a position shared by the PCI before 1974 and its PRC successor between 1991 and 1998. The PCF, meanwhile, has often placed itself in a position of uncoalitionability, while seeking to maximize support through hard Euroscepticism, a strategy also pursued by the PRC after 1998.

Party-Specific Factors

Party-specific factors, such as leadership, and party type have additional explanatory power on the change of the Euroscepticism of Communist

parties. Unlike the international and national factors, which act as independent variables in specific periods of time, party features mainly constitute intervening variables. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide an in-depth analysis of the main party features, and therefore this section focuses on the features that are more significant in explaining the party's positions on Europe.

First, party leadership can set the tone of the discourse on European integration, especially in the case of highly centralized and institutionalized parties, as were Western Communist parties (Guiat, 2003). This explains why, within each party, it is difficult to detect factions that have a different orientation towards Europe, as compared to party leadership. The 'democratic centralism' in party organization applies to the PCF, PCE and the PCI, even though in the last-mentioned case it gradually faded away. A second feature shared by the PCF, the PCI and the PCE was the longevity of the parties' historic leaderships. Since changes of routes on European issues are more likely to take place when leadership is handed over, the slow turnover of political leaders tends to make the policy path-dependent. For example, the PCF's change of route on Europe took place when a new leader, Robert Hue, was appointed in 1994.⁵ The PCI's turnaround on European integration and NATO membership took place when Enrico Berlinguer became party secretary.⁶

Another important factor affecting party policies towards the EU is the party type (cf. Taggart, 1998), and, in the cases under consideration, whether it is a protest party, like the PCF and PCE, or an established party, like the PCI, which, in the 1970s, aimed to become a governing party. Since the general election in 1994, which took place with a semi-majoritarian system, the PDS has largely become a catch-all party, whereas the PRC and PdCI are protest parties.

Conclusions

Over the 50 years or so covered in this study, the PCF and PCI moved from hard Euroscepticism to soft Euroscepticism and even pro-EU attitudes, whereas the PCE has never really been hard Eurosceptic, not at least since 1977. International factors, namely the relationship with the USSR and the power dynamics of the Cold War, were more important in the earlier period of European integration and tend to explain similarities in parties' trajectories towards the EC in those years. International factors have higher intensity, though they exert their influence less frequently; for example, critical junctures occurred in 1962, 1974, 1985 and 1989. National and party-specific factors, instead, explain divergence in party responses to Europe, starting from the 1970s. At the national level, two variables are important: public opinion attitudes towards European integration and political institutions, to be precise the electoral system, the configuration of the party system,

especially the relationship with potential allies and competitors, and consequently the need to moderate views on Europe in order to become coalitionable. Also significant is the normative social order, such as the Jacobin tradition in France and the experience of the Franco regime in Spain. National level factors have lower intensity, but exert their influence much more frequently – the parties compete and survive in their domestic party systems on a daily basis. Finally, party-specific factors, such as leadership and party type, bring additional analytical leverage, as they set the tone of the discourse on European integration.

We can therefore conclude that our hypothesis is correct. Influenced by vote- and coalition-seeking considerations, West European Communist parties have modified their Euroscepticism at different speeds and at different times, despite starting from a position of hard Euroscepticism established by their status as anti-system parties supported by an external power. This finding is of note if we consider Communists to be a regimented party family, since the divergence between the three cases commenced well before 1989. International factors are important, although they affected the three parties differently. This study has shown that domestic and party-specific factors are of equal weight.

The parties adjusted their policy on the EC to the national environments in which they operated. The process of integration itself changed substantially over time, the main turning point being the Single European Act in 1986. Until 1985, the EC was less relevant for domestic party systems and it was only after the relaunch of the process of European integration that the latter has exerted wide-ranging effects at the national level. The achievement of the capitalist Single European Act provided an ideal target for anti-system campaigning for the Communists, which they failed to take up. By the late 1980s, the electoral decline of the PCF had accelerated, while its policy concerns were primarily domestic. Meanwhile, the Italian and Spanish parties were pursuing coalition- or vote-seeking strategies that would not have benefited from Eurosceptic positioning.

From a methodological point of view, this study suggests that an historical perspective using the comparative method sheds new light on the analysis of Euroscepticism within and across party families. We contend that the analytical framework devised for this research has explanatory power beyond the subject matter itself, and it would be interesting, for example, to apply it to other party families besides the agrarians, who have already been addressed by Batory and Sitter (2004).

Two main caveats concerning the findings of this comparison are in order, however, the first being that Western Communist parties belong to a rather 'special' party family, for which international developments were extremely influential in the Cold War era. For other party families, the international level of analysis would have little, if any, meaning. A similar caveat concerns the specificity of Communist parties in terms of internal democratic centralism and the relatively strong role played by ideology, which, however, proved

to be rather flexible on the issue of European integration. Despite the fact that these party-specific features lessened over time in the PCI and PCE, compared to the PCF, they were surely more pronounced among Communist parties than in parties of other types.

Notes

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- 1 The term 'Euroscepticism' is of journalistic origin and coined only during the early 1990s with reference to the British Conservatives. However, its entry into standard political discourse has been emulated in scholarly work on opposition to the EU. This criterion determines its retrospective use in this article.
- 2 It should be noted, however, that after 1991 the main successor of the Italian Communist Party, the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), no longer belongs to the Communist party family, being, in effect, a social democratic party. The research therefore focuses on the other two small successor parties, which are still members of the Communist family. Furthermore, since 1986, what is really being evaluated in the Spanish case is not the PCE position, but the level of Euroscepticism of the wider Izquierda Unida (IU).
- 3 Before 1969, the French PS was called the SFIO (French Section of the Workers' International); however, for the sake of simplicity it is referred to as PS throughout the article.
- 4 The boycott by the French government of the Council of Ministers and withdrawal of Gaullist deputies from the European Parliament were in order to force the protection of the national veto.
- 5 Between 1930 and 2001, the PCF had four leaders: Maurice Thorez (1930–64) and Waldeck Rochet (1964–72), both Stalinist; Georges Marchais (1972–94), who promoted a programmatic alliance with the PS, and after 1984 steered the return to full opposition; and Robert Hue (1994–2001), who supported openness and the entry into the Jospin government and was succeeded by Marie-George Buffet in 2001, who has maintained policy continuity on the EU despite electoral decline in 2002 and consignment to opposition.
- 6 The PCI leaders were Palmiro Togliatti (1926–64), Luigi Longo (1964–70), Enrico Berlinguer (1970–84), Alessandro Natta (1984–88), and Achille Occhetto (1988–94), under whom the PCI's social democratic route started. The PRC was led by Sergio Garavini (1991–94) and Fausto Bertinotti (1994–). The PCE secretary-generals were: Santiago Carrillo Solares (1960–82), Gerardo Iglesias (1982–88), Julio Anguita's (1988–98) and Francisco Frutos (1998–).

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