



Reasserting the Nation State

The trajectory of euroscepticism in the Netherlands 1992-2005

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Abstract

Scholarly debate on party-based Euroscepticism centers on the questions of how to define, measure and explain Euroscepticism. As a starting point, this paper observes that studies on Euroscepticism either focus on the positions of individual parties on issues of European integration or on the character of public discourse in different member states. Studies on party positions excel in emphasizing the agency political parties provide for Euroscepticism and the extent of domestic contestation, whereas studies of public discourse are more apt to uncover the meaning of Euroscepticism and its dynamics as parties interact in the public sphere. Both strands are predominantly focused on European integration in general or constitutional issues specifically. The present study incorporates the qualities of both strands, using the method of claims-making analysis. It furthermore aims to enrich our understanding of party-based Euroscepticism by studying a non-constitutional issue: debates on the EU budget in the Netherlands between 1992 and 2005. A mixed methodology research design provides both quantitative and qualitative data in a longitudinal comparative case study, leading to a conceptualization of how the permissive consensus in the Netherlands changed towards Euroscepticism through a process of politicization in which the issue was internalized, followed by calls for renationalization. Substantially, this study shows how the budget and its costs featured prominently in Dutch party politics and how the importance of this issue fed and featured Euroscepticism.

Introduction¹

Euroscepticism as expressed by political parties in the various European Union (EU) Member States has attracted considerable scientific research in recent years (Marks et al. 2006; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b; 2008c; Taggart 1998). The scientific attention for this topic seems warranted, given the increased resistance European integration is encountering in public opinion, mass media and party politics (Hooghe and Marks 2008). Furthermore, Euroscepticism may affect the form and legitimacy of the EU polity (Eriksen and Fossum 2007), as it may restrict the possibilities of continued European integration. Despite extensive investigation, there remain controversies surrounding the definition, measurement, and causal explanations of party-based Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008d). The present study aims to address two gaps in scientific research on party-based Euroscepticism. First and foremost, it argues that there are two different strands of research, which hardly interact with one another. One strand focuses on different *political party positions* related to European integration, whereas the second strand focuses on the way Euroscepticism is expressed in *public discourse* by political parties among others. To include the qualities of both strands, and avoid their pitfalls, this study employs claims-making analysis to study Euroscepticism. As a secondary aim, this paper draws attention to the preoccupation in studies of Euroscepticism with constitutional EU issues and argues that a full understanding of Euroscepticism requires a study of political contestation on non-constitutional issues, to complement existing knowledge. Non-constitutional issues may both feature as well as feed into Euroscepticism.

Studies with a focus on party positions understand Euroscepticism as a range of negative attitudes towards European integration as a *principle*, aspects of the policy formulation *process* within the EU, or the continuous *project* of integration as advanced by the EU (Morgan 2005: Ch. 3). In other words, parties may be opposed to any cooperation between nation states in Europe, they may oppose the way EU policies come into existence, or they accept the status quo, but oppose any further political or economic integration. Opposition to the project may further target the increasing influence of supranational institutions in existing EU competencies or *level* of integration, competencies in new policy fields or *scope* of integration, or the *inclusiveness* of integration, i.e. enlarging the group (of countries) affected by European

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integration (Börzel 2005). Studies on party positions clearly demonstrate the extent to which EU issues are contested domestically, since they excel in exposing party differences on EU matters (Hix and Lord 1997; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a). Clear differences between parties then allow for comparative research to uncover the causal mechanisms underlying these differences. However, by allocating static positions to individual parties, the interaction between parties through political contestation is lost. As a result, these studies fail to grasp the dynamics of interaction through which Euroscepticism is advanced or inhibited. Also, by limiting themselves to allocating each party a single position, these studies often overlook which specific parts of the principle, process or project of integration parties are opposed to.

Studies of public discourse on European integration, on the other hand, understand party-based Euroscepticism as a characteristic of political communication on European integration, to be located in the public sphere where party contestation takes place (De Vreese 2001; Diez Medrano 2003; Larsen 1999; Trenz 2004). Here, Euroscepticism is often reflected in how political parties (and other actors) *frame* European integration. In other words, how they organize “[...] an apparently diverse array of symbols, images and arguments, linking them through an underlying organizing idea that suggests what is at stake on the issue” (Gamson 2004: 245). These studies excel in clarifying meanings attributed to European integration by parties as well as how Euroscepticism develops through the interaction of political parties, thus emphasizing historical development of Euroscepticism. However, they often limit themselves to what they perceive to be the dominant narrative in each Member State, understanding a national public discourse as a single unit of analysis. Although we may thus understand the meaning and targets of Euroscepticism, this holistic approach underemphasizes the extent to which different interpretations of European integration are contested domestically. In other words, studies of public debates focus our attention on whether political debates in certain member states feature Euroscepticism, but they rarely clarify which parties advance and which constrain Euroscepticism, let alone quantify or map the extent of this contestation. Furthermore, by primarily focusing on changing narratives, the extent to which Euroscepticism requires political parties as its agents becomes blurred.

Despite the apparent lack of interaction between these two strands of research, they do not necessarily exclude one another. As a start towards bridging the gap, party-based Euroscepticism may be defined as a constellation of claims advanced by political parties in the public sphere negatively characterizing European integration in principle, aspects of the EU policy formulation process, or the level, scope or inclusiveness of the integration project.

Both strands of Euroscepticism studies share a preoccupation with constitutional issues, which makes sense since Euroscepticism can be understood as some degree of polity opposition. This focus may also be the pragmatic result of studying Euroscepticism in party manifesto's or through expert surveys, where general positions on European integration predominate (Klingemann et al. 2006; Ray 1999), or of studying Euroscepticism in general elections or EU-referendum campaigns, which – if EU issues feature at all – predominantly feature constitutional issues (Johansson and Raunio 2001; Raunio 2007; Veters et al. 2006). As a result, we know little of party-based Euroscepticism as expressed in non-constitutional issues, despite the fact that policy-formulation processes on non-constitutional issues may not only feature more general polity opposition, but also feed it by creating grievances. Examples of such non-constitutional issues are the Service Directive, the Foot and Mouth Disease scandal, or Jörg Haider's assent to the Austrian government (e.g. Miles 2002; Van de Steeg 2006).

As stated above, this paper aims to address these two lacunae in the study of party-based Euroscepticism. It does this by using claims-making analysis: a method capable of measuring party positions, interaction and narratives, arguably including the best of both strands of research. The use and value of this method will be demonstrated studying debates in the Netherlands on the three multiannual EU budgets adopted between 1992 and 2005. The Netherlands provides an interesting case as many parties have moved from a pro-European position in the early 1990s towards open Euroscepticism more recently. Before turning to more elaborate investigation of the three budget debates, I will briefly introduce the case first and the method second. Finally, the conclusion will discuss the added value of using claims-making analysis for studying Euroscepticism and address some of the particular findings related to the EU budget, as opposed to constitutional issues.

The Netherlands, the EU budget and claims making

Euroscepticism in the Netherlands has received much scholarly attention in both Dutch (Aarts and van der Kolk 2005; Vollaard and Boer 2005) and English (Aarts and van der Kolk 2006; Harmsen 2008; Vollaard 2006) following the negative result of the June 2005 referendum on the Constitutional Treaty. Despite the shock of the Dutch 'no' to both politicians and scholars, a steady increase in party-based Euroscepticism can be traced throughout the 1990s (Voerman 2005). In fact, party politics in the Netherlands provide one of the most obvious cases of a change from 'permissive consensus' to 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2008), as the general tone of the debate turned

from rather pro-European into a rather Eurosceptical. The same duality in scientific research that characterizes the general study of party-based Euroscepticism can be found in studies of the Netherlands. Position studies, like those of Pellikaan and Brandsma (2005), map Dutch political parties on a dimension of pro - anti European, where the mainstream parties CDA (Christian-democrats), PvdA (social-democrats), VVD (conservative liberals) and D66 (progressive liberals) as well as GroenLinks (greens) rank among the pro-Europeans, whereas the Eurosceptical group consists of SP (socialists), PVV/Wilders, LPF (radical right), ChristenUnie/GPV/RPF and SGP (orthodox protestants) (Pellikaan and Brandsma 2005: 102). While studying the public debate, Harmsen (2008) argues that Dutch political parties have increasingly been struggling with defining the 'limits' of European integration. Neither one of these studies manages to include both the sense of agency and contentiousness in party-based Euroscepticism of position studies, as well as the meaning, interaction and dynamics of discourse approaches. Furthermore, due to the prominence of the June 2005 referendum in the Dutch political debate on European integration, Dutch scholarly efforts have so far been especially preoccupied with constitutional issues (e.g. Crum 2007).

One of the few non-constitutional EU issues that has been deemed to have had a strong influence on Dutch Euroscepticism, is the EU budget and the exceptional position of the Netherlands as large net pro-capita contributor to the EU (Harmsen 2008: 326; Petter and Griffiths 2005). This paper will investigate this further, by studying Dutch political debates on the multiannual EU budgets, during the negotiation of these so-called 'Financial Perspectives' in the European Council between February 1992 and December 1992 (Delors II), July 1997 - March 1999 (Agenda 2000) and February 2004 - December 2005 (Financial Perspectives 2007-2013). Aside from being particularly important for understanding Dutch Euroscepticism, the EU budget provides a rich topic for comparative research across issues and time, since a broad range of issues - including the Common Agricultural Policy, Structural Funds, total size of the budget, British rebate, EU tax competency, the EU's external dimension and Research and Development funds - all are included in the Financial Perspectives and return in more or less the same form every seven years.

To study Dutch political debates on these three EU budgets, this study employs claims-making analysis (Koopmans 2002; 2007; Koopmans and Statham 1999). This method is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between studies on party positions and studies on public debates on European integration. It captures the agency and contestation of party positions, as well as the interaction and dynamics taking place in public debates, as it maps how parties frame the EU budget and how claimants and their claims develop

within the policy-formulation process and interact with one another. A claim is defined as a unit of strategic or communicative action in the public sphere: *'[...] which articulate[s] political demands, decisions, implementations, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors in a policy field'* (Statham 2005: 12; Vettters et al. 2006: 8). The archetypical claim would be a verbal speech act concerning some political good that could be loosely translated as "I (do not) want [...]". However, the above definition is far more inclusive, incorporating claims such as meetings of the European Council, protests by farmers, resolutions tabled by parliaments and critical comments by journalists. In textual terms, a claim can be as short as a few words, or as elaborate as several paragraphs, as long as it is made by the same claimant(s), making a single argument on a single topic related to the EU budget. Claims consist of WHERE and WHEN, WHO makes a claim, on WHAT, HOW, addressing WHOM, for/against WHOSE interests and WHY.

This study employs a hierarchical mixed methodology design (Read and Marsh 2002). It takes an inductive approach. Although the method of claims-making analysis and its variables are fixed, the values within the variables are inductively constructed. Qualitative findings during the coding *process* are corroborated with quantitative coding *results*. These results are provided in tables 1 and 2 below and consecutively further explored and illustrated with particularly characteristic or influential individual claims in a historical narrative of the three budget debates. The historical narrative allows for the identification of key claims that represented a turning point in the debates as well as a qualitative assessment of the extent to which claims featured Eurosceptic justifications and fed into more general Eurosceptic narratives surpassing the EU budget as such. Furthermore, it allows for the separate reconstruction of the three distinct debates and a subsequent comparison.

Quantitative findings

Claims-making analysis has already been used to study party-based Euroscepticism by Statham (2005; 2008), who operationalises it as party positions towards European integration on a scale from +1 (Pro-European) to -1 (Anti-European). Each claim made by parties is attributed a value of +1, 0, -1 or neutral on this scale and then average positions for each party are calculated. Applying a similar method in this study results in averages as displayed in Table 1. The topics of claims are divided into four groups: evaluation of the current or previous budgets, revenues in the budget under negotiation, expenditures in the budget under negotiation and the process of policy-formulation. Only claims in the second group load onto

Euroscepticism. Thus, all claims that, if honored, would decrease the revenues of the EU in the next budget period or make the budget more dependent on national contributions rather than 'own resources' are interpreted as Eurosceptical (negatively loading onto the pro-anti scale), as they would reduce the level, scope and/or inclusiveness of integration by curbing influence of supranational institutions in relation to Member States, limiting policy options of the EU, and reducing beneficiaries of EU funds. Likewise, claims supporting a bigger budget or more maneuvering capabilities for supranational institutions load positively on this scale. Thus, a plea for a reduction of the size of the EU budget or a smaller national contribution would get value -1, whereas a plea for less spending on agriculture would not load onto this scale as this addresses expenditures, rather than revenues.

Table 1: Average position of Dutch political parties on European integration and percentage of claims made²

	Delors II (1992)		Agenda 2000 (1997-9)		Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 (2004-5)	
	Average	%	Average	%	Average	%
SP (Radical Left)	.	0	-0,29	3	-0,17	10
GroenLinks (Green)	.	2	0,40	9	0,44	9
PvdA (Social Democrats)	0,07	36	-0,01	23	-0,12	12
D66 (Progressive Liberals)	.	3	-0,17	16	0,02	7
CDA (Christian Democrats)	0,03	48	-0,11	13	-0,12	31
VVD (Conservative Liberals)	.	5	-0,24	27	-0,15	14
GPV/RPF/ChristenUnie, SGP (Orthodox Protestants)	.	5	0,00	8	-0,04	8
CD, LPF, GroepWilders (Radical Right)	.	0	.	0	-0,82	8
Total	0,04	99%	-0,13	99%	-0,14	99%
N		97		380		487

Several key aspects of the changing Dutch party landscape with respect to European integration become apparent immediately. First, only mainstream parties had a publicly advocated position on the EU budget during the Delors II debate, and it was rather neutral. More parties became involved in the debate on Agenda 2000, coinciding with a turn towards Euroscepticism as the average position of all claims declined from neutral (+0,04) to slightly

² Claims that were made by a member of the political party, in any office, or supported by one are included in the calculation. Claims in newspapers and plenary debates are weighed equally.

Eurosceptic (-0,13). Finally, the debate on FP 07-13 shows strong politicization of the EU budget as radical right parties join the debate and positions range from +0,44 (GroenLinks) to -0,82 (LPF and GroepWilders). However, this article argues that this table does not provide a full picture yet, as it restricts itself to positions, excluding the narratives and interaction of parties in the public debates. First, it will become apparent that many claims, particularly in the latter two periods, do not concern the content of the budget at all and can therefore not be attributed a value on the pro - anti EU scale. Instead, they purely concern the interaction and behavior of actors, thus addressing the policy-formulation *process*, rather than its *content*. For instance, they might evaluate the behavior of the national government or the European Council without stating policy preferences. Furthermore, by adding the 'public discourse' aspects of claims-making analysis, including changes in meaning attributed to the EU budget as well as attributed constituencies, a richer picture of party-based Euroscepticism emerges. Table 2 provides an overview of the extent to which pro-European and Eurosceptic parties participated, how parties in government and opposition interacted, and the most frequent values on WHAT (topics), for WHOSE interests (constituency) and WHY (framing) featuring in the claims.

Table 2: Patterns of claims-making analysis per budget period³

		Delors II (1992)	Agenda 2000 (1997-9)	Financial Perspectives 2007- 2013 (2004-5)
WHO (Claimant)	Pro-European	93%	88%	74%
	Eurosceptic	7%	12%	26%
	Total	100%	100%	100%
at WHOM (Addressee)	Gov → Gov	91%	33%	23%
	Opp → Gov	4%	46%	51%
	Gov → Opp	4%	16%	17%
	Opp → Opp	0%	5%	9%
	Total	99%	100%	99%
WHAT (Topic)		Agricultural Policy	Government Behavior	Government Behavior
WHOSE interests (Constituency)		Other Member States	Own Nation	Own Nation
WHY (Frame)		European integration	National Interest	National Interest
Total N		97	380	487

The next three sections will explore the three debates in chronological order, in more depth. These qualitative discussions will discuss, illustrate and contextualize Tables 1 and 2 above.

³ The table incorporates all claims made by Dutch party officials in any office, in both newspaper articles and plenary debates. The claimants are categorised as follows: pro-European parties are all parties that advocated a 'yes' during the 2005 referendum (CDA, PvdA, VVD, D66 and GroenLinks), whereas Eurosceptical parties are all parties that advocated a 'no' (SP, Wilders, ChristenUnie and SGP) as well as their predecessors and party-family relatives (CD, LPF, GPV and RPF). GroenLinks is counted as Eurosceptic in 1992 and pro-European afterwards. Addressees exclude claims without addressees, organised along whether the claimant's party and the addressee's party were in government or opposition at the time.

Delors II

The debate in the Netherlands on Delors II can be briefly summarized as late, little, mild and restricted to the two coalition parties, CDA and PvdA. It was late because parliament discussed the budget extensively in public only after the Edinburgh Council had reached final agreement. It was little and mild since the debate was not very intensive or aggressive. This is also reflected in the neutral positions taken by the only two political parties making ten or more claims as shown in Table 1. Finally, it is remarkable to find a near complete absence of opposition parties in the debate. Only coalition parties disclosed comprehensive views on the EU budget and challenged government over its conduct during the negotiations. Domestic political contestation, as far as it existed, can thus be characterized by intra-party politics and limited contestation between the two coalition parties. Thus, there is little trace of traditional coalition versus opposition dynamics.

It may come as no surprise that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the most addressed issue concerning the EU budget (Table 2), as this is the biggest expenditure post of the EU budget. Although the Dutch government – with clear consent by VVD and D66 in opposition – supported the MacSharry reforms – which changed production support to income support – and wanted to block increases in total expenditures on CAP, the position of the CDA remained ambiguous. It was caught between agreed government policy on the one hand and the interest of Dutch farmers – a main electoral base of the CDA – on the other hand. Agricultural Minister Piet Bukman (CDA) was accused by PvdA Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of deliberately hindering reforms (Koele 1992). The main public proponent of substantial reductions of the CAP was Finance Minister Wim Kok (PvdA) (Algemeen Dagblad 1992). Largely, because he feared the Netherlands would become a large net-contributor to the EU if the CAP remained in current form. Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers (CDA) tried to dampen the potential conflict within his government and favored a pragmatic approach, as illustrated by his vague call for an ‘intelligent discussion’ (Tweede Kamer 1992: 2834).

Despite this potential – and even open – conflict within government, opposition parties did not jump on the opportunity to embarrass government. This lack of issue saliency is further illustrated by the predominant constituencies of the claims. As Table 2 illustrates, the most frequent constituency of the EU budget were other Member States. In other words, opposition parties either did not acknowledge the potential impact (Eriksen and Fossum 2007) of Delors II on the Netherlands and Dutch citizens, or they choose to look at the policy-formulation process from a European perspective, rather than a national one. Exemplifying this, Ina Brouwer MP (GroenLinks)

argued politicians should not be so preoccupied with 'the EC's internal affairs', but rather focus on the break-up of Yugoslavia instead of the EU budget (Tweede Kamer 1992: 2823). The lack of domestic contestation is further substantiated by the predominant framing of Delors II. It was portrayed as a necessary step to safeguard the future of the project of European integration in general – and the Maastricht Treaty in particular. Thus, Dutch parties followed the European Commission's lead, which had justified Delors II as 'the bill of Maastricht'. By accepting the Commission's rationale, Dutch political parties implicitly accepted the major features of Delors II as well, without much scrutiny.

To conclude, the permissive consensus of the early 1990s is clearly reflected in the Dutch debate on Delors II. Most parties in parliament allowed government to act as it pleased, with only the governing parties CDA and PvdA calling government to account. Even so, they did not take up very critical positions (Table 1) or positions that diverged from each other or government. Finally, Delors II was seen to affect mainly 'other Member States', as evident in the predominant constituency in party claims and the Commission's justification of needing a large budget and Cohesion funds to safeguard 'European integration' as agreed in the Maastricht Treaty was taken over by Dutch political parties. There is little to no trace of Euroscepticism in all this.

Agenda 2000

The Dutch debate on Agenda 2000 is remarkably different from the debate on Delors II and can be characterized as intense, diversified and internalized. Firstly, Agenda 2000 was much more intensely debated than Delors II. As Table 2 shows, a total of 380 claims were made by Dutch political parties on Agenda 2000 compared to merely 97 on Delors II. This near quadrupling of claims cannot simply be explained by the longer policy-formulation process, which lasted only twice as long. Secondly, the debate became much more diversified. As more political parties participated, different narratives were brought in. The debate on Delors II had been dominated by the two mainstream government parties CDA and PvdA. In contrast, the debate on Agenda 2000 still saw a majority of claims made by government parties PvdA, VVD and D66, but also featured significant contributions by a range of opposition parties. Finally, and most notably, the debate became nationally internalized. That is to say, political parties now focused on the implications of the budget for the Netherlands and Dutch citizens, rather than other Member States.

From 1995 onwards, the Netherlands had become a net-contributor to the EU budget. The change from net-receiver to net-contributor had happened so drastically, that by 1997, the Netherlands were the highest per capita net-contributor to the EU budget. The VVD argued this was the most salient political aspect of the EU budget. In 1995 – directly after the Netherlands had just become a net-contributor – the VVD party by means of Hans Hoogervorst MP tabled a resolution urging government to address this problem, which was accepted unanimously by parliament (Hoogervorst 1997). The strongest advocate for a drastic reduction of Dutch net-contributions, however, would become Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm (VVD). The VVD argued Dutch money was used to subsidize an inefficient and corrupt agricultural sector in France and Italy, thus linking a reduction of net-contributions to reform of the CAP. The VVD had traditionally been the party in favor of reducing national taxes and government spending at the domestic level. Transferring this argument for limited government to the EU level thus fitted party ideology as well as Zalm's position as Finance Minister. As a result, the VVD was most vocal in the debate (Table 1). The VVD's argument was supported by Prime Minister Wim Kok (PvdA), whom we remember as the main actor warning about the Dutch contribution to the EU back in 1992, when he was Finance Minister. The smaller coalition party D66 and its strongly pro-European Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo supported the tough stance against net-contributions. A call for reductions of net-contributions fitted well with its liberal credentials and the position taken by its two larger coalition parties. This accounts for the relatively Eurosceptic position taken by the otherwise pro-European D66 party during the Agenda 2000 debate, as shown in Table 1. Thus, the VVD party was able to rally its coalition partners behind the call for a significant reduction of net-contributions. Following general elections in 1998 after which the 'purple' coalition continued, explicit figures for a reduction in net-contributions were included in the governing agreement of the three coalition members (Kok et al. 1998).

There was some objection from the pro-European CDA and GroenLinks parties who argued the primary policy concern in question was realizing EU enlargement, and that enlargement would inevitably cost money (Tweede Kamer 1997). The strongest challenge, however, came from the European Parliament, in the person of Piet Dankert MEP of the PvdA (Dankert 1997). The former Europe Minister remained one of the strongest pro-European voices within the PvdA. He argued the net-contributions were an insignificant burden on the Dutch economy, disqualifying the tough language of the Dutch government. He further argued the figures used by the Dutch Finance Ministry to calculate net-contributions were highly dubious, unlike those of the Commission, which significantly differed. Several opposition parties in parliament jumped on the opportunity to embarrass the biggest governing

party PvdA with this apparent internal conflict between Prime Minister Kok and Dankert MEP, giving headaches to party leader Ad Melkert (PvdA) who had to defend PvdA policy as clear and united in parliament (De Vries 1998).

With some exceptions, Dutch political parties generally agreed that net-contributions should be reduced, the CAP should be reformed and enlargement should be facilitated by the budget. Thus, there was limited substantial distance in party position. Rather, the discussion quickly focused on *how* the Dutch government should achieve these goals and, especially, whether the Dutch government should be willing to use its veto power if Dutch contributions were not reduced, even if this meant risking enlargement. We find this reflected in Table 2, where ‘government behavior’ is the most frequently addressed issue concerning the EU budget on Agenda 2000.

To conclude then, we find a clear *politicization* of the EU budget in the Netherlands during the debate on Agenda 2000, as opposed to the debate on Delors II. This politicization consists of several components⁴. Firstly, there was a more intense debate as more parties participated in the debate, and more claims were made. Secondly, the debate became more polarized as parties took more diverging positions (Table 1), tried to present a coherent internal position on the budget, and challenged each other – particularly government parties – when this was not the case. Coalition members agreed on a common position before taking the issue to parliament. This stands in marked contrast to Delors II, where MPs of coalition parties were the main challengers of government. Thus, the EU budget became part of ‘normal politics’ with a clear government vs. opposition dynamic. Thirdly, the debate became internalized as parties now claimed the EU budget affected domestic constituencies (‘own nation’). No longer was the EU budget viewed as hardly relevant, with repercussions only for other countries. Rather, there were clearly attributed domestic implications of Agenda 2000. Finally, the process was framed more as intergovernmental conflict. This together with the domestic interests at stake legitimized a strong defense of ‘national interests’.

Financial perspectives 2007-2013

Despite Zalm’s efforts during the policy-formulation process on Agenda 2000, the Netherlands remained the largest per capita net-contributor and the initial proposal of the Commission for FP 07-13 did not change that. Between 1999 and 2004, the Euro had been introduced. Many Dutch citizens complained that

⁴ De Wilde (2007: 19ff) provides a more elaborate discussion of the concept of politicization and its components: intensity of debate, polarization of opinion and public resonance.

prices had risen as a result of the Euro. Add to this the extensively discussed impending enlargement with poor countries, and it becomes evident that there was ample sensitivity in the Netherlands to the economic costs of EU membership. This is reflected in the continued prominence of net-contributions as the central issue in the Dutch debate, although, as Table 2 shows, 'government behavior' was again the most frequent topic.

Largely, the Dutch debate on FP 07-13 was more of the same in relation to Agenda 2000. Again, it was a much more intense debate than the debate on Delors II, featured more traditional patterns of party contestation and was dominated by the same portrayed constituency (own nation) and framing (national interest) as the debate on Agenda 2000. If anything, politicization was even more pronounced as the intensity of the debate increased from a total of 487 claims compared to 380 on Agenda 2000 (see Table 2). There are however two remarkable differences of a quantitative and qualitative nature respectively, when comparing FP 07-13 to Agenda 2000. The first major change is that FP 07-13 features a stronger voice of Eurosceptic parties, particularly the radical right. During the Agenda 2000 debate, the critical voice arguing for a 'gloves off' defense of national interest was made by one of the mainstream parties (VVD) in government. Now, the toughest challenges to the EU budget were voiced by the radical right parties (LPF and GroepWilders) in opposition, who saw no need of the Netherlands being a net-contributor whatsoever. Together, with the SP, ChristenUnie and SGP these Eurosceptic parties account for 26 percent of the claims during FP 07-13, compared to 12 percent during Agenda 2000 and 7 percent during Delors II (see Table 2). Secondly, the Eurosceptic parties 'trespassed' into the previously dominant narratives of pro-European parties, combating them not only with different frames, but attempting to change the meaning of the frames formerly dominated by pro-European parties (Sides 2006). Thus, FP 07-13 showed clear calls for *renationalization* in the debate, rather than simply more intense politicization.

During Delors II and Agenda 2000, pro-Europeans in favor of a larger EU budget had defended their position using two justifications. On the one hand, they argued a large budget was needed to safeguard the project of 'European integration'. It was required to accomplish the goals the Member States had set themselves and failure to increase the budget would risk everything that had been accomplished so far. Thus the budget was needed to prepare for monetary union (Delors II), EU enlargement (Agenda 2000) and making the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world (FP 07-13). On the other hand, they would argue a large budget was legitimate because it embodied 'EU solidarity', codified as one of the most important values of the EU in the Treaties. During the debate on FP 07-13, these two ways of framing were also used for a Eurosceptic argument. EU solidarity, as framed by the

Dutch government and Eurosceptic parties in parliament, ought to mean that every Member State paid according to its position in the ranking of GDP per capita. Thus, the Netherlands was willing to be a net-contributor on an equal level with other rich Member States with roughly equal levels of income per capita, like France and Germany. In response to being called 'egoistic' and 'nationalist' by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Balkenende responded: *'I told Chirac that I can't explain to people in the Netherlands why the average Dutch person pays so much more [to the EU] than the average French person.'* (Tweede Kamer 2005: 5597). In other words, the Dutch government responded to calls from other countries for solidarity with the exact same reply. The citation above also emphasizes the centrality of nationality in the use of the solidarity framing. The centrality of the nation state as the main frame of reference in EU solidarity further becomes apparent in the discussion on Structural Funds. Many Dutch political parties argued that the Structural Funds should be restricted to poor Member States and should no longer be used to pay for projects in poor regions of rich Member States. Thus, EU solidarity was increasingly framed as solidarity *between Member States*, rather than between rich and poor EU citizens or winners and losers of the internal market. Calls for renationalization thus reflect a reassertion of the centrality of nation states in the EU at the expense of both supranational and sub national levels of government.

Perhaps even more striking is the change in qualitative meaning to the 'European integration' frame. Taking the negative result of the June 2005 referendum on the Constitutional Treaty as support for his claims, Mr. Rouvoet MP (ChristenUnie) argued: *'[...] according to us, the money to reduce the Dutch net-contribution] should be taken from the Structural Funds and from the renationalization of certain competencies and expenditures.'* (Tweede Kamer 2005: 5607). A mere reduction of the net contributions was no longer the main aim, but part of a general rolling back of European integration in accordance with the will of the people as expressed in the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty. According to the Eurosceptic parties, the project of European integration didn't need safeguarding anymore, it needed to be reversed.

To conclude, the specter of a corrupt, inefficient, money consuming EU that exploited the Netherlands unfairly continued to dominate the Dutch debate on FP 07-13 after having been created by the VVD from 1995 onwards. Having released the beast, the VVD lost ownership of the issue, particularly to the new radical right parties who took the claims for a reduction of net-contributions to a new level. The *politicization* during the debate on Agenda 2000 continued during the debate on FP 07-13 and was complemented by a stronger role of Eurosceptic parties and a call for *renationalization*. Eurosceptical parties contested the framing of the EU budget by pro-Europeans as a case of

ensuring further European integration and defending European solidarity, thus legitimizing a bigger EU budget and more competencies for supranational institutions. These two ways of framing were now also used by the Eurosceptics to argue the exact opposite: a smaller EU budget, to reverse European integration and reinstall EU solidarity between member states. Eurosceptical parties thus combined negative claims about European integration, with positive claims for an intergovernmental Europe. Euroscepticism in this final debate thus coincides with a reassertion of nation states as the prime building blocks and frame of reference within the EU.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated Dutch political debates on the multiannual EU budgets between 1992 and 2005 to study how party-based Euroscepticism develops and to contribute to the scientific debate on the measurement and conceptualization of Euroscepticism. The results confirm previous findings that political parties in the Netherlands have collectively become much more Eurosceptic in the time frame under study (e.g. Harmsen 2008; Voerman 2005). Domestic politicization of net-contributions to the EU budget both featured and fed Euroscepticism. This paper argues that – as far as the EU budget is concerned – this development can be categorized into three distinct phases. First, the debate on Delors II demonstrated continuation of the permissive consensus in the Netherlands with little debate and interest from political parties for EU policy-making. The debate on Agenda 2000 illustrated a clear *domestic politicization* of European integration. The debate became more intense, parties profiled themselves more in traditional inter-party politics and the consequences – particularly the costs – of European integration for the Netherlands were more strongly articulated, as well as the perceived need to defend national interests. Finally, the debate on Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 continued the trend of politicization, but added to this a clearer presence of Eurosceptic parties and a call for *renationalization*. The framing of European integration previously employed by pro-Europeans now became contested by Eurosceptic parties arguing for a reversal or limiting of European integration. These claims challenging the value of European integration as such, combined with concrete calls for a reduction in the size of the EU budget clearly meet the definition of Euroscepticism as given in the introduction, as they address the principle and project of integration respectively. The three phases and their dimensions are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Modeled trajectory of Euroscepticism in the Netherlands in six dimensions

	Permissive Consensus	Politicization	Renationalization
Intensity of debate	Low	High	High
Polarization of opinion	None	Low	High
Eurosceptic party presence	Low	Medium	High
Party contestation	Intra-party	Inter-party	Inter-party
Policy constituency	Foreign	Domestic	Domestic
Framing integration	Positive	Positive	Negative

At the conceptual level, the main finding of this study is that Euroscepticism in formerly pro-European Member States like the Netherlands can grow through a process of politicization. As this study presents a limited case study only, the substantive findings will be presented as a hypothesis to be further tested: all other things equal, Euroscepticism may develop in an EU member state, when national political parties successfully manage to centrally position concerns with costs of European integration into domestic discourse, and these concerns remain neither successfully refuted by pro-European parties, nor substantially addressed by the EU. These 'costs' need not necessarily be economic in nature, although in the case of the Netherlands, they were.

While investigating the process in which party-based Euroscepticism develops, this paper bases its empirical analysis on the method of claims-making analysis. Arguably, this structured form of content analysis is uniquely positioned to contribute to the collective effort of accumulating knowledge on party-based Euroscepticism and domestic contestation over European integration, because it combines valuable qualities of both studies of party positions and of public discourse on European integration. On the one hand, this method goes beyond party position studies, which often restrict themselves to the content of the positions parties take on European issues. This restriction inhibits our full understanding of Euroscepticism and domestic contestation, because it neglects interaction between parties, the meaning of Euroscepticism and large parts of party contestation which concern the process of policy-formulation, rather than its content. On the other hand, claims-making analysis goes beyond studies of public discourse, clearly

distinguishing different individual party positions, their importance as agencies of Euroscepticism and mapping the patterns and degree of political contestation. Combining the assets of both strands of studies was needed to fully capture the intermediary process of politicization which provides a dynamic missing link between the permissive consensus of the early 1990s and the Euroscepticism of the early 2000s, as well as the qualitative meaning of renationalization characterizing the final debate. Claims-making analysis is therefore ideally suited to conceptualize and measure politicization and party-based Euroscepticism. These advantages of claims-making analysis, however, come at a price. It is a highly labor intensive method requiring the qualitative coding of a relatively large amount of data. This clearly restricts the scope of research, as reflected in the limited case study provided in the present study.

Although highly labor intensive, the detail and complexity of claims-making analysis, combined with its small units of analysis, allow for a thorough investigation of contestation on individual policy-formulation processes, like those on the EU budget, rather than restricting the analysis to the undifferentiated issue of 'European integration' or constitutional issues as contested in referenda and general elections. Aside from illustrating specific contestations over meaning, like the value of European integration and the extent of European solidarity, this study also shows difference in the positions of individual Dutch political parties as opposed to their positions on constitutional issues as expressed in 2004-2005, when the EU budget debate unfolded parallel to the referendum campaign on the Constitutional Treaty (cf. Pellikaan and Brandsma 2005). The liberal parties VVD and D66 are markedly more Eurosceptic, while the protestant parties ChristenUnie and SGP are more pro-European than on constitutional issues. This might be a result of sampling or measurement error, but I would rather uphold that individual parties' positions diverge quite strongly on European integration, depending on the specific issue and context in question. Although a strong defender of the internal market, the VVD combined its argument against high taxes in general and holding the office of Finance Minister with active calls for the reduction of Dutch contributions to the EU budget. Likewise, ChristenUnie and SGP may be rather hostile towards the EU in general, but farmers are a key constituency for them, leading them to defend the Common Agricultural Policy against those who would reduce it to limit the Dutch net contribution. Rather than being dismissed as measurement errors, these differences across issues should reinforce our understanding of European party politics as multi-dimensional and issue specific. It should encourage research into Euroscepticism within the context of multi-level political contestation on constitutional as well as non-constitutional issues in EU policy-formulation processes.

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